film art

an independent quarterly devoted to the serious film.

Number six (Volume 2.) Autumn 1935

CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial	52
Film, its Basic Structure, *by* Irene Nicholson	54
Cinema Surfaces, *by* Leonard Hacker	56
Educational Films or Intellectual Telescope *by* Robert Fairthorne	59
The Last Refuge of Nationality *by* Denis Johnston	63
One a Week! *by* Andrew Buchanan	64
Stage and Film Directing *by* Lewis Jacobs	67
The Lost Legion of Films *by* Kirk Bond	73
The Difficulty of Reviving "Film Classics" *by* Vera Llewelyn	74
Review Section	76
Song of Ceylon by Marie Seton	76
The New Gulliver by Nancy Cunard	78
Chapaev by Irene Nicholson	78
A New Film by Walter Ruttmann *by* John C. Moore	79
Shorter Notices and Film Index	80
Book Reviews	84
Correspondence	86
Film Societies	89
Comment	90

Editors: IRENE NICHOLSON, JOHN C. MOORE

Assistant Editor: ROBERT FAIRTHORNE

Correspondents:

International: MARIE SETON.

France: NANCY CUNARD, BRIAN MONTAGU.

U.S.A.: KIRK BOND, LEONARD HACKER, LEWIS JACOBS, HERMAN G. WEINBERG.

Foreign Agents:

Europe: *Au Pont dc l'Europe,* 17 Rue Vignon, Paris, VIII.

U.S.A.: *Gotham Book Mart,* 51, West 47th Street, New York.
The Little Theatre, 525, North Howard Street, Baltimore, Md.

Australia: *McGills,* 183-185, Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

India: *Row and Co.,* Parel Tram Junction, Bombay.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLISHING OFFICES: 5, Joubert Studios, Jubilee Place, London, S.W.3.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 4/4d. for four numbers postage free.
Single Copies 1/1d. postage free.

Obtainable from all bookshops or direct from the Publishing Offices.

Copyright by the Editors.

"The film today only very, very seldom attains to more than a manner or style —an aim discarded by every serious and earnest artist as spurious, specious and non-propagating — and almost never to form which is the unity informed *by the thematic-philosophic intention. Without this intention, of course, there can be no form."*

Harry Alan Potamkin
in Close Up.

EDITORIAL

We must apologise to our readers for the delay in the appearance of No. 6 of **film art**, but owing to a general reorganisation of the review, ensuing from a change of editorship, publication was unavoidably postponed. This change of style, however, in no way affects the aims and purposes of the journal which, as heretofore, will remain a quarterly devoted to the film as a serious art.

For the benefit of our new readers we would once again mention that we are neither influenced nor subsidised by any outside organisation or studio, and are entirely free of all vested interests. We are an individual effort and stand for free expression on all matters relating to the cinema. That our independence is genuine and not merely a trade label, we believe to have given ample proof of in the past. We can assure our readers that it is much easier and certainly far more remunerative to pander to public taste. Experience has taught us that to be independent to-day one must be prepared to make considerable sacrifices, which in our case means a loss in advertisements. To ensure our individuality we are therefore entirely dependent upon the goodwill and the support of our readers.

The purpose of this publication is to analyse and criticise impartially the cinema as an independent form of art. Film journalism, as a form of intelligent criticism, is very little practised nowadays, the reason being that most papers do not wish to commit themselves. They prefer a shallow kind of summary that can be interpreted at convenience and without obligation. What is generally mistaken for criticism are the personal likes and dislikes of the critics. Very few film critics are fully qualified for the function they are performing. It is not an uncommon procedure in Fleet Street to entrust film criticism to persons who have little or no fundamental knowledge of the subject. This is a regrettable fact, but nevertheless true.

The art of criticism, far from being a question of likes and dislikes, is subject to irrefutable rules. All cinema art is built up on a fundamental conception, and by his treatment of this conception the director, the cameraman and the technician is judged. The treatment may vary according

to outlook, but never the basic structure. In writing a scenario, no matter how original the twist, one has to conform to certain laws. The same applies to the production of the film based on this scenario. As long as the critic is not intimately acquainted with the laws relating thereto, he is not qualified to pass judgment. This does not necessarily mean that all film critics should agree, for a work of art—once established as such by the laws to which it conforms—leaves plenty of scope for individual reflection.

In view of many responses received from our readers, we have decided to enlarge upon our present form by allocating a section to the following features:—

1. THE AMATEUR FILM PRODUCERS, (This Section to begin with No. 7)
   in which we shall discuss the film as a unified whole, from the synopsis to the development of the scenario and the translation of it into terms of motion, light and shade. Our contributors to this section will be authorities on their subject, and as such permitted to enunciate their views through our medium.

2. THE FILM SOCIETIES,
   not only in London, but in the provinces as well. We believe that a closer co-operation should be aimed at between the Film Societies on the one hand and their public on the other, and by devoting some space to their interests, we hope to stimulate the repertory movement.

3. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR,
   in which the public will be given an opportunity to voice their opinion in matters of cinematic interest. In this section we shall deal with our readers' reactions, discuss their problems and bring their wishes to the notice of the film producing centres. Needless to say that all such contributions should be of sufficient interest to justify their publication.

Having once more outlined our policy, all that remains is to live up to the ideals which we have set ourselves, and we can assure our readers that we shall spare no effort to reach a high standard in film journalism. We shall do everything within our power to make **film art** both interesting and educative by its contents and manner of expression.

THE EDITORS.

For regularity's sake we would mention that Mr. B. Vivian Braun, the former Editor of " Film Art ", has no longer any connection with the paper, either in an editorial or in any other capacity, and consequently any engagements entered into, or statements made by him on behalf of the publication, are automatically cancelled.

The studios and the renting and producing companies are requested to address all communications and to send all trade show tickets to The Editor, " Film Art ", 5, Joubert Studios, Jubilee Place, London, S.W.3.

Cheques should be made out to " Film Art " and crossed.

The Editors once again tender their apologies for any inconvenience that may have been caused by the change.

FILM—ITS BASIC STRUCTURE

IRENE NICHOLSON

It constantly happens that the technique of the moment is confused with a whole art medium, and exterior traditions are condemned because they do not conform to fashion. This has happened in the film today; and ironically the Russian montage theory, which grew out of a necessity to " get across " a few elemental concepts to varied and often uneducated audiences, has, outside Russia, become a " cut for the cut's sake " dilletantism. The achievements of the Russians lead us to assume that the whole of cinema can be contained in this theory, or in that part of it which is based on the assumption that visual shot + visual shot = abstract concept. While we have certainly forgotten, if we ever knew, that film is many things beside an art. It is a whole new means of communication between people.

Film is a new means of education, of propaganda, of recording events and processes, of entertainment and of the perpetuation of experience (art). Each use must evolve its own technique; but for many reasons, principally economic, the director's purpose often remains obscure. It is therefore one of the film critic's most difficult tasks to discover this purpose and to find within the film itself his standards of criticism. Imposed standards are simply useless.

For non-aesthetic ends it is sufficient for the directors and critics to explore the possibilities of technical innovatons as they arrive. For aesthetic ends it is important, since art always piles tradition upon tradition, that the first bricks should be laid on the right foundation. The essential basis of film must be discovered: what is film that other media are not?

Film is a new synthesis of dimensions—height, breadth and time.[1]

The capabilities of every art are determined primarily by its dimensions and only secondarily by its materials and tools. The arts existing before the film may be divided into groups, each under a general common aesthetic, as follows:—

Plane surface—drawing, painting, etching, carpet weaving etc. Concerned with the discovery of a permanent reality underlying transitory nature, a discovery which is completely possible in two dimensions only, since a series of views of an object presents to the senses a series of realities, related but not identical.

---

[1] Fairthorne notes, in his article in this issue, that film may be used as a four dimensional tracing paper—but the fourth dimension is created by an illusion only. Suppositions such as these—let x = any given quantity, let a perspective line = the dimension of depth, let 1″ = 1 mile, are allowable in all non-artistic communication for the sake of brevity and to reduce to symbols the cumbersome materials of life. But it is the very essence of art that the presentation is itself the idea, and imagination as the mathematician knows it does not exist. To contemplate art it is necessary to have sufficient imagination to negate one's own and accept another's, an act of which most people are more or less incapable, their own imaginations being taught and therefore rigid. It is easier to imagine x as any given quantity, a taught feat analogous to reading the alphabet, than to imagine a bowl of sunflowers as Van Gogh imagined one, which is a " seeing into " (as distinct from a " looking at ") a simple enough act but one for which the speed of contemporary life allows no time.

Spatial—architecture, sculpture, pottery, landscape gardening etc. Arising from the desire to inscribe (architecture) and describe (sculpture) the infinite and illimitable qualities of space. In this connection it may be noted how space forces itself as an active material upon the sculptor or architect. The draughteman seems (though only to the superficial observer) to consider the paint or pencil alone, whereas space to the architect and sculptor is necessarily as plastic as stone.

Life dimensions (space with direction in time)—ritual, ballet, sport etc. The ordering of muscular reaction to external facts and internal emotions.

Temporal—music, poetry, novel etc. The architectonics of time—necessity to fix the infinite quality of time, to inscribe it (rhythm) and describe it (pitch, tone and image). A philosophy of metamorphosis, within limits conceivable by the human mind (literature) and the intuition (music). Note that in poetry, and rhythmic literature generally, mind and intuition are in varying degrees fused.

These groups require fuller definition, but they are given here simply to show how the dimensions of an art absolutely determine its ideal content, whereas its materials only modify this content in course of presentation.

Film may now be considered as a synthesis of plane and temporal art. The photographic film has a sufficiently sensory illusion of space (shadows presuppose three dimensions) to relate it to the aesthetics also of space, but this illusion must be considered only as one of many possible modifications of film by specific materials and tools, and not as an essential of the medium. The true ideal content of the cinema has yet to be analysed. But first it must be stressed that the camera, the celluloid base, the method of projection, are no more than the mechanics which have made this new synthesis for the first time possible. When film is defined by its bare essentials then all technical innovations will either be easily absorbed in its aesthetic or will be manifestly not film at all but simply a new means of giving shape to some other art. Colour will belong to the former,[2] stereoscopy to the latter class; for the colour film will bear the same relationship to the monochrome film as crayon to pencil drawing, whereas stereoscopy will be not film, but a new and multiple theatre.

The film as we know it today is a very small thing. Apart from a few cartoons (and an occasional experiment like *Night on the Bare Mountain*) only one of its surface media—the photographic—has been explored.[3] While within the photographic only one technique—that of the Russian montage school—has even approached perfection. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that this lonely off spring of contemporary cinema, a technique (of cutting) within a technique (of photography) within an aesthetic (of height,

---

[2] It is worth noting, however, that sculptors have, for the most part, found that colour confuses the simple relationship of planes and shadows, two essentials of the photographic film in which colour becomes, therefore, an almost certain redundance.

[3] See article by Leonard Hacker in this issue. At a recent presentation of a G.P.O. experiment in colour, by Len Lye, it was announced that no camera had been used in its making; whereupon the audience shrieked with ridiculous laughter.

breadth and time) which is itself only the artistic use of this new method of communication, should so often be confused with the whole medium.

It is time we took our eyes off the branch and attempted to explore the wood. Montage is important to us because it is the contemporary technique film, as free verse is the contemporary technique of poetry. But blank verse did, it must be admitted, achieve a little; and no doubt there will be other rhythms in future. Nor must we forget that words and film are used for other things but art.

Most important of all, we must remember that form exists in art as the outward, communicable expression of an intuition—the perpetuation of an experience which would otherwise die in the mind that conceived it. Without intuition there is no reason why any shape should be thus and thus; without it we may as well cease at once to talk of dimensions, montage, photography and every other part of the film's outward paraphernalia; we may as well scrap the cinema houses and their degenerate audiences (who are there only to look for synthetic sensation or, on the other hand, to perform intellectual gymnastics) and get down once more to the business of living.

But so long as there are such films being made as *Dawn to Dawn* and *The Song of Ceylon* (which attains an almost mystic insight into the life of a people), we believe there is hope for the film.

●

CINEMA SURFACES

LEONARD HACKER

After seeing a great number of photographs, both cinema films and stills, one finds a curious monotony in the medium even among the camera's first rate products. One often hears the remark, " Those pictures or films are wonderful but they are just photographs." What accounts for this curious prejudice against photography is hardly a dislike of photography but something lacking in the medium that perhaps can be remedied. That lack is variety of tonal forms or surface textures rather than thematic content (judging only the best films). There is paradoxically in cinema, vibrant life because of its accuracy in recording forms and forms in motion, and deadly monotony because of the absence of surface variety. How to rid the art of this sameness and yet retain its vitality is one of the future tasks of cinema artists.

Up to the present, cinema development has stressed thematic content and montage, while tonal effects and textures remain a more or less hit and miss affair in which individual shots or groups stand out, but in which the entire composition is sadly lacking in tonal unity. A perusal of other pictorial art forms (and utility forms now included as art) reveal a variety of surfaces on two-dimensional mediums which might just as well be cinema screens if we were to animate the images and apply montage principles and drama to the subject matter. It is not the contrast between coloured mediums and monotone, for both may be distinctive or mediocre in their own right

as the case may be, but there exists in other two-dimensional mediums the flexibility of drawing patterns by hand or machine, a number of primary mediums known as art forms, each permitting of a thousand talents. Yet photographic products, good or bad, remain unnecessarily " photographic."

The established surface forms are roughly—Painting, Tapestry, Sculpture, Etching, Lithograph, Wood-cut, Colour Print, Pencil Drawing, Ink Drawing, Porcelains, etc. What are the technical possibilities of the camera in repeating these surfaces within itself and creating new surfaces as well? These will have to be discovered and experimented with, animating the static mediums and discovering new methods and laws for them, subservient to cinema principles, creating new variations of form with them that now remain dormant in their static condition, yet eternally cry to burst into new life. And only cinema can give them new life.

If one regards the art forms of the past, those mentioned and others, as including practically everything possible in static representation, fixed in time, and products of long experiment in the eras in which they were created, through the evolution of man's consciousness from the cave drawings of primitive man to the highly wrought products of masters in all mediums, all wrought from unconscious depths and therefore complete in every possible known medium, then the cinema, being the culmination of all previous arts, must, besides being tonally photographic, partake and represent all forms that have preceded it, either singly or in combination, since it is simultaneously a recording and creative instrument. Unless the cinema, by its nature eternally alive, keeps its predecessors alive and ever renews their surface forms and textures by variety of creative efforts, in time there will be nothing to prove that such surface mediums ever existed in all their greatness. There is then the possibility of a variety of mediums within the all embracing cinema medium.

The peculiar genius of the cinema is continuous motion of line and mass and the relations between and among physical forms both evolving and still, a super-mosaic that includes all mosaics. The tonal conglomerate that composes most films today is legitimate enough as an art form but it is only one kind of variety. The true possibilities of cinema surfaces are hidden when we contemplate that there has not been a film that is completely a painting, a tapestry, an etching, sculpture or colour-print, none save the animated cartoon ink drawing (which it seems will remain forever fettered to cartoon ' humour ') no serious attempts having been made save the fantasy films of Lotte Reinegger some years ago. There has been no film that consciously used any of the above surfaces and yet remained cinematic, although there have been any number of films that imitated paintings in a series of stills such as the costume dramas. Dreyer's *Jeanne D'arc* represented sculptured heads but lost true fluidity of cinema. Occasionally one sees an etching effect such as Byrd's polar ship coming through the mist in his South Pole film, or scenes with qualities of wood-cut in Soviet farm dramas; all of them flashes of beauty that show what cinema can do in bringing alive other medium surfaces within itself and that make us long for complete compositions, however elemental, done in these various surface medium textures, each devoted to one surface form.

Think of a film done as a painting in which events, characters and forms evolve and perform as brush strokes under the painter's touch yet utilizing cinema principles as its basis, using colours perhaps, as a painter would, a growing organism rather than a disorganized tonal montage (or hash) of single scenes snapped only when a lighting opportunity presented itself or planned to fit into a plot. Think of a cinema tapestry where the screen looks like a tapestry, is a tapestry, with its physical warp and woof of threads (monotone or colour) and in which the events and actions taking shape will weave themselves into a tapestry, will represent the soul of the tapestry, the entire again subservient to cinema principles. The cinema surface will become a living cloth and the spectator feeling and living the texture of this cloth. Again think of an etching. All events will be etched in fine lines of action as though produced from a steel engraving, and the theme will conform and express the etching, as the etching will the theme. The surface and the content will be one fused unit. The processes of all art forms, if concentrated in time, as they would be in cinema, are cinematic processes yet we rarely have the opportunity to see them in the making, and if we do, we have no record of the processes. (Mere record of artists hands working or machinery producing pictures in instruction films for artists should not be confused with the idea of mediums evolving upon the screen). Here is the painting, etching, drawing, or print growing before one's eyes by hands unseen just as in ordinary cinema. We can only guess what new discoveries will be found when the old mediums are cinematically applied. Think also of combinations of mediums within a film, consciously used, in which paintings evolve into etchings, etchings grow into wood-cuts, wood-cuts into tapestries, tapestries into porcelains, etc. All await the advent of mechanical invention for practical application. The idea will stimulate inventors to create the physical effects of the various art forms into photography which up to now has remained " photography." When this has become possible the content of films will be made to conform to the diverse surface textures. The results will be wonderfully unified conceptions of art. It will be the screen's answer to all challenges of superiority of past static forms over itself, including them all in a superior representation, yet never usurping their rightful places as separate forms for other uses. It will constantly discover new aspects and conceptions of established art forms.

There will come into being mechanical devices such as special lenses, films and screens to create these surfaces and these will be sufficiently flexible to include endless talents and styles within each surface form. There will be Etching lenses, films and screens, Painting lenses, films and screens, Wood-cut lenses, films and screens and so on for Sculpture, Tapestry, Pencil, Ink, Porcelain effects and the rest. Scenes will be taken of real people, actions and events as now or with the more difficult and restricted animation in purely synthetic cinema, and the results will vary with the artists' creative expressions as in the past. Content, theme, montage, composition and design will find more definite ways in which to present themselves in all their meaning and beauty. Films styles to-day differ only in subject matter, direction and acting but in surface textures they differ scarcely at all. Though light and shade are primary, these require varying textures to satisfy individual

creation which now is regimented onto the monotonous " silver screen." The superiority of still photography in tonal values is apparent when we see that various paper surfaces obtainable create differing effects with the same negative yet even here the variety of mediums is only suggested. Still photography may have to lead the way in this matter, for cinema has shown us but one texture.

●

EDUCATIONAL FILM OR INTELLECTUAL TELESCOPE?

ROBERT FAIRTHORNE

" In signs one observes an advantage in discovery which is greater when they express the exact nature of a thing briefly and, as it were, picture it; then indeed the labour of thought is wonderfully diminished."—*Leibniz.*

" . . . they will have an instrument that will serve to exalt the intellect not less than the telescope serves to perfect their vision." (*idem*).

The main purpose of educational films is, and always will be, to get through the ambiguity of verbal description right to the thing in itself. In fact it is used as a window on the world. For this use it is helped by the fact that a ' real photograph ' possesses, as no picture however accurate can possibly possess, a certain mental sense of reality. Over and above such accidental properties the very nature of the film, which demands selection and definite ordering of the material in time, allows us, by editing and pictorial composition, to superimpose on the ' reality ' a formal structure of abstract relations (' above ', ' below ', ' before ', ' after ', etc.). It is therefore possible to present certain facts and to marshal arguments without having resource, in the first instance, to the spoken or written word.

The editing methods of Kuleshoff, Eisenstein, and Vertov, which have often been criticised as over intellectual, are of even greater importance to the educational film than to the artistic. For it is impossible to avoid the fact that a film, unlike a diagram, must have a definite beginning, middle, and end in time, and that is true of all its parts. Although a film, produced by the usual methods, originates from a sequence of pictures or diagrams on celluloid, it is not in itself a sequence of pictures or diagrams, but a sequence of processes or events. These can only be seen in a predetermined order and each for only a limited, and predetermined, time.

To neglect this fundamental property of the film is to neglect the only way in which the film is superior to the blackboard. Even if current theories of film construction are regarded with suspicion, it must be remembered that these theories are based upon an actual fact, though they may be mistaken in interpretation. The very nature of film *forces* some kind of ' constructive editing ' on the director, and if this is left to look after itself the results are appalling. A large amount of wasted ingenuity has gone to the making of films which are of far less value than the diagrams from which they have been prepared.

The difference between a diagram and a film is that the former is purely spatial, allowing only of what may be called a synoptic order, while a film must be temporal, allowing of very little spatial arrangement (by reason of the limits of the screen and of the time allowed for viewing it), but capable in a very high degree of order in time. The diagram is synoptic, a synthesis, and therefore essentially static. The film is a selective sequence, a process, and therefore essentially kinetic. Only extreme familiarity can make it possible to view a film (or anything else, like a symphony, that has the formal structure of a film) synoptically. When this can be done, the subject is comprehended in a way impossible by any means other than intense application and powerful imagination. It is true that the last must be used in applying the knowledge obtained, but intense effort made in order to comprehend fundamentally simple arguments, like many in the 'higher' mathematics, is unjustified when it arises from the inadequacy of language to describe processes or abstractions.

The choice between a diagram or a film rests then on whether the subject can be shown better as frozen by the Medusa head of the synoptic view, or as expressed as a process. Take, as examples, the relation between temperature and the seasons, and the Second Law of Thermodynamics. A moving picture of the motion of the mercury in a thermometer shown alongside a calendar is inferior to the more usual time-temperature graph, while nothing could show better the true nature of the Second Law of Thermodynamics than the sight of a world in which it did not hold good, simply by running a film backwards.[1] Similarly it is impossible to give such a clear idea of the shape and dimensions of an object, even with a stereoscope, as it is with a 'moving camera' shot made by running the camera around the object. For while the stereoscope shows the solid from two points of view only, the film shows it from a mentally continuous sequence of points of view. Even to those with limited visual memory this is equivalent to a *synoptic* view of a three dimensional object. Not only have we satisfied the old drawing office request for 'three dimensional tracing paper', but we have actually achieved a four dimensional tracing paper!

It has been said above that the fundamental properties of the film allow us to superimpose on actuality by selection, association, and contrast of scenes, a logical argument not based on language. This is a unique power when employed on representational images, as photographs, but the non-representational applications are overlooked. A great deal of our visual experience,—and all visual experience is the field of the film,—is nonrepresentational or semirepresentational. Such, for instance, are the alphabet, maps, traffic signs, the signs of music, chemistry, and mathematics, the conventional signs and symbols of advertisements, and so on. Even the arbitrary symbols? and ! look really puzzled and surprised. The possibilities of typographical symbols have been recognized and applied by no artist nor educationalist, other than Leibniz.

---

[1] The very curious physics and geometries that can shown in the world of the cinema screen are worthy of better overlords than King Kong and the cartoonists. The writer has touched on this subject in an article in *film art* No. 1.

The expression of argument without recourse to verbal language has been achieved in mathematical notation, but the signs of mathematics, though by no means arbitrary in the sense that shorthand symbols are arbitrary, are logical developments from arbitrary basic signs and symbols. Also, from the very nature of mathematics, they deal not with things, but with the abstract relations between things.

The existence of so highly developed a system together with the power inherent in the film, and the mental sense of reality of the photograph, suggest possibilities of which we have not yet touched the fringe. The abstract relations of mathematics might be translated into terms of processes to get over the difficulty that legitimate abstraction presents to students, and to provide a genuine *comprehension* of the problem as opposed to the knowledge of how to work it out. Again, the established signs of mathematic, and of other branches of knowledge, might be combined with representational images to form a method of visual argument far more powerful and less ambiguous than that shown in static applications such as ' pictorial statistics.' Finally, the signs of mathematics might themselves be operated kinetically and pictorially. This is by no means a fantastic proposal, as the origins of the operational calculus and the theory of sets, to say nothing of the concepts of real and complex numbers, have shown. These last two possibilities are fascinating, but, as most users of educational films have more to do with instruction than with research, the method of using the film for straightforward mathematical instruction will be looked into more closely.

First it must be made clear that there is no *a priori* reason why an educational film should be projected in front of a class on a screen only. This will always be the usual way, but it is also possible for a student to run over a film by himself, in conjunction with a textbook, just as he might a drawing or gramophone record. This implies the existence of a small hand viewer which, since it is not required for projection of a real image, can be made for a few shillings. This should not be a fatal blow to a logical development of the educational film. The illumination would be either the reflected light of the room, or a pocket torch bulb. All then that is required is a magnifier and the intermittent motion, most of which are of mechanical complication unnecessary for this job. Such a device, for 9.5 mm. film, was on the market some years ago, but at a ridiculous price (about 30/-).[2] If a screen and a plural audience are considered essential to the art of the film the following remarks still apply, but it will be assumed that the films are projected more than once at each sitting.

The fundamental difficulty of mathematics lies in the fact that it deals with abstract relations and has no interest in the *Ding in Sich*. This is got over by introducing abstractions in the guise of real lines, curves, and areas. The practice could not be defended if it were mere argument by analogy, a poisonous habit which leads to the almost universal anthropomorphism that assumes arguments applicable to persons to be equally valid when applied to

[2] The kinetoscope method, *i.e.* flicking over the pages of a booklet, is regarded as too costly for a film of reasonable length. However, such kinetic booklets have been issued in the U.S.A. for demonstrating points in biology. (see *Nature*, March 2nd 1935)

collections, institutions, and nations. Fortunately this objection need not apply, since the methods of pure mathematics are not analogous to, but refinements of, the ideas applied to real figures.

Mathematical films have therefore to deal with a problem differing from that of the descriptive film. For while the latter attempts to avoid false abstraction by subordinating the structure of the film to its content, the former must subordinate the content to the structure. For achieving this the kinetic, or dramatic, nature of the film is ideal, for abstract relations are more obvious than the objects between which they hold when these relations are in the form of processes. Thus while it is more obvious that a row of soldiers is a row, rather than that it is composed of soldiers, it is still more obvious that a motion is periodic even if the object moving is not recognized.

The first decision to be made in the construction of a mathematical film is, as is the case with any educational film, whether the principle to be expounded is best presented in synoptic form, or as a process. If the former a diagram should be used, if the latter the relations must be transformed into the motions of suitable units. This can always be done in many different ways, for the operations of mathematics, addition, multiplication, and integration, possess an indefinite number of simple mechanical interpretations. Simple, that is, from the visual point of view; the instrument maker might be hard set to construct the apparatus. We are at liberty to demonstrate our principles by means of *a purely visual mechanics*.[3]

Enough has been said to make clear that there are gigantic possibilities in the educational film which have not yet been realised, let alone explored. If too much emphasis has been put on mathematics, it is only because this is a subject of which the writer has some knowledge, and also one in which representation by visual means has reached a high standard after generations of evolution in practice. The film is a tool which makes it possible to use the same, only more vivid, methods in other fields. The photograph makes it possible to introduce some form of reality, but it should not be forgotten that the film is capable of reproducing *any* visual event, not merely the visual events of nature. A recent book on educational films begins " The educational film is essentially a record."! Above all it must be remembered that the film is a process, not a diagram. If no mention has been made of colour, sound and stereoscopy, it is because these cannot change the fundamental nature of the film, they can only alter the tone of the processes. It is easy to quarrel with the montage experts, but at least they know what film really is.

film art WILL NOW BE PUBLISHED AT REGULAR QUARTERLY INTERVALS
No. 7 WILL APPEAR EARLY IN FEBRUARY

[3] So far only used for comic effect in cartoons, " Felix the Cat " and " Out of the Inkwell " in particular.

THE LAST REFUGE OF NATIONALITY

DENIS JOHNSTON
(Author of *The Moon in the Yellow River.*)

Lamenting, like most people connected with the Theatre, the limitations of modern theatrical production with its dreary three Acts and constipated mechanics, I have longed for the greater freedom of the Cinema. This was before I discovered that the dominating passion of the majority of scenarists appears to be envy of the wider canvas of the stage. In fact, the far-off hills are green, and to each of us the other fellow's job is always the happy hunting-ground.

One of the most deceptive things about films is their lack, as compared with stage plays, of international appeal. A play of strongly marked national characteristics (as distinct from one containing mere local allusion) is frequently more appreciated abroad than at home. One would imagine that the film was even more cosmopolitan, but strange as it may seem exactly the reverse is the case.

I discovered this first of all in the course of the production of a sub-standard film for the Dublin Gate Theatre* based upon a well-known short story by Frank O'Connor. In its literary form the tale has been highly praised in all parts of the English-speaking world, and I am certain that as a play it would be equally popular. Translated into terms of cinema it is, however, interesting to find it assuming certain national characteristics—one might almost say, a language—that only becomes apparent when shown to a non-Irish audience. This has nothing to do with the plot, for plot is of course, a mere superficiality. It is something much more fundamental and it appears to be inherent in the medium itself. One discovers, in fact, that almost without knowing it, one has been building up the essential import of one's film story in the form of a continuous, unspoken commentary that assumes throughout a clearly defined set of assumptions on the part of one's audience and is directed in some way at the sub-conscious. These assumptions, which are of infinitely greater importance in the Cinema than in any of the other arts, are based roughly upon historical and sentimental associations—in other words, upon Nationality,—and they are what make the cinema so potent an expression of racial difference (in spite of the fact that it is usually attacked on precisely opposite grounds).

Thus, a picture intended to express quite disinterestedly an aspect of the late Anglo-Irish conflict, must either start from a fundamental assumption that this conflict was a romantic struggle of the weak against the strong, or else it must start from the equally ligitimate position that it was an example of police operations against public disorder. In the first case, sympathetic comment on the fate of a number of British Tommies comes to one with a shock of revelation and surprise, however sophisticated one may be, and it consequently raises a problem in ethics and a conflict of sympathies, as would be an Irish scenarist's intention. But show the same picture in London, where the second assumption is inherent, and this very comment

* *Guests of the Nation*, a 16 mm. film noted in the film index (see page 84.)

will have exactly the opposite effect. Instead of arousing a conflict of sympathies it merely confirms the existing impression that a policeman's lot is not a happy one, and thus the same picture assumes a totally different meaning and even a new mood. This could never happen in the purely literary form and would even be unlikely to occur on the stage.

So much for pictures with a polemic or propagandist intent. Where no such object is in view, we can surely find no more complete expression of national peculiarities than in the products of the studios of those countries which, unlike our own are not intimidated into employing Russian cameramen, Jewish scenarists, and Argentines, Portugese and Greeks in every other technical branch. Consider the young Frenchmen in *Sous les Toits de Paris*—how different from the Frenchmen of the theatre, and yet so like France, thanks to the added depth given by the cutter to their psychological setting. The same applies to the peasants of *The General Line* and of *The Road to Life*—they are considerably more Russian than any of the figures in Tolstoi or Dostoievsky, since the latter are forced by their medium to paint their pictures by particularisation while the camera is the supreme generaliser.

It seems a pity, to come nearer home, that British pictures for all their bogus oak panelling and Tudoresque garden suburbs are unique in giving so little genuine expression to their country of origin, in the sense that the Theatre of Shakespeare was English. It is very hard nowadays to find anything on the screen or on the stage except those synthetic personalities at one time turned out by the great public schools with the express intention of giving mild-mannered nonentities the necessary poise to deal with Babus in the far Indies. It is unfortunate that the slowing down of Imperial expansion should have coincided with this mass production of ladies and gentlemen. Shepherd's Bush and Shaftesbury Avenue are overflowing with them, either self-consciously playing up to Mayfair or even more self-consciously playing down to some strange idea of a comic Whitechapel—in its way one of the most revolting forms that social snobbery can take.

But since Mayfair is no more England than Whitechapel is comic, the English screen remains devoid of all nationalism; and we must wait for better times before we can expect British films to reflect the real genius of the race.

●

ONE A WEEK!

ANDREW BUCHANAN

A weekly output of non-fictional films is equal to the production of at least five feature films a year, for the footage released can never be less than 52,000. This is composed of single 1,000 foot reels, each one being again sub-divided into approximately five sequences of 200 feet. The task, therefore, is to find nearly three hundred separate subjects every year, and mould them into suitable form and length.

For some reason or other the non-fictional, magazine film is frequently

confused with the news-reel—probably because it is about the same length and appears now and then between Features. Length, however, is the *only* characteristic common to both, for the newsreel is fundamentally different both in conception and construction from the magazine film. News is snapped up and shot irrespective of climatic conditions, is assembled at top speed, and released a few hours later, having no pretensions whatever to be anything but a brief pictorial version of current events. The magazine, on the other hand, aspires to be a feature in miniature, its photographic quality being quite as good as—and frequently better than—that of the Feature. Moreover it is, or should be, constructed upon a carefully prepared basis. Again, there must also be a maximum amount of skill applied to the cutting and assembling of each sequence, and yet the rate of output is the same as that of a news reel, save when the latter appears twice weekly.

All such points should make vividly clear the difficulties besetting the director of fifty-two one reelers a year, especially when it is remembered that he has to maintain a very high standard of production each week. The magazine must be leisurely—its contents must be as acceptable last year as next—each of its sequences must begin at the beginning, gradually and logically unfold, and end when the story has been completely told—all within two hundred feet. Moreover, the brevity of this footage must never be apparent to the audience, so that the condensing of subjects is one of the major problems. Imagine the task of filming a vast industrial subject, such as the making of a huge safe which fully occupies several workshops for eighteen months. One has to portray the manufacture of the component parts, their assembly, and finally the finished job—all in two minutes. Equally bewildering is the problem of how to show the detailed processes involved in, say, the manufacture of electric light bulbs, and the countless departments which contribute to the system, in the same ridiculously small footage. The solution lies in the fundamental approach to such sequences. If one enters a factory prepared to follow the advice of the manager and film every single process, the result will be expensive chaos, but if one possesses the ability to select only those processes which, weaved together, will create a vivid impression of what is going on, then it is possible to handle the production with success. A one reeler portraying the making of a motor car, a bar of chocolate or a top hat, from start to finish, produced for the benefit of the technical staff of the firm concerned is one thing, but to create a brief and impressive sequence showing the major activities in an industrial process that will *hold* the interest of an audience which is completely indifferent to manufacturing *details* is quite another tin of film!

Briefly, therefore, systematic magazine production is achieved by arranging for a Production Schedule to control the entire group. This Schedule is fed by a Contact Department which is forever searching for new ideas, and, if it is efficient, it is working a long way ahead of our current production. Each subject suggested as a likely contribution to the reel is surveyed by the Contact Department, and if the result is encouraging, the Director, Cameraman, and an Electrician visit the premises or house

(assuming it is an outside location) and a simple script is prepared which has to be agreed to by both parties. Simultaneously, the Electrician is inspecting the existing lighting arrangements at the premises so that he can arrange to instal additional studio lights. When this is done, the subject is scheduled, and the Cameraman (if he can manage the job undirected) studies his script, for he knows that to obtain a smooth running story of two hundred feet he must shoot a maximum of approximately 450 feet. The exposing of large quantities of film is not permissible in this class of production. Rushes are viewed immediately upon receipt, and, if not wanted for release, are catalogued and placed in the library. It is the business of the Contact Department to see that sufficient exterior subjects are shot and stored during the summer months to feed the winter releases when exterior production is down to a minimum, and the camera or cameras which have been so occupied are, from November to February, concentrated upon industrial and other sequences depending upon artificial lighting Side by side with industrial and exterior subjects are the studio sequences, which require special settings—subjects ranging from musical performances to fashion displays. All rushes, whether from the studio or elsewhere, are received by a central cutting room, and, if selected as suitable for the reel under construction, are immediately worked upon.

This leads to the interesting work of creating a perfect balance of material in a reel, for, as you can imagine, one subject out of five can ruin the entire issue merely by being inserted in the wrong place. The sustaining of interest throughout, by the position and relation of each subject to those preceding and following it, is a task demanding long experience. A reel must open well, it must maintain that level until the middle is reached, by which time added strength is needed. This *increased appeal* must continue until the ending subject, which must again arouse even more interest, so that the reel ends upon a powerful note. Industry, music or vaudeville, an item of feminine interest (whatever that may mean!) and perhaps an exterior sequence noteworthy for its photography, will make up the single reel, but all such subjects must be so weaved together that unity is created, and there is a distinct relation between them all. Merely to join such sequences together and divide each with a title that is accompanied by hundreds of trumpets is a sin, for there should be no interruption in the pictorial flow—nothing to force the fact upon the audience that one subject has ended and that another is about to begin.

Turning, for a moment, to exterior sequences, I personally have developed the idea of filming the countryside for its beauty. I have not searched for places possessing a story ; I have left ruins to those who are content to make a film resemble a mammoth packet of picture postcards. I have studiously avoided famous beauty spots, and sought out villages and fields and farmyards which are known only to the inhabitants, and I have built, around these quiet places, sequences possessing photographic value, and intimate shots offering, I believe, an irresistible appeal to almost everybody. My fashion sequence rarely if ever consist of tall waxen creatures stalking forever up and down marble stairs, for I strive to present these subjects differently, forcing the camera to analyse important features of a gown,

the texture of material, and to show the person who designed it, and how he or she did so.

But apart from careful attention to such details, it is not very easy to find time to experiment, with a weekly release always just round the corner. By experiment I mean the evolving of new cutting schemes—the preparation and shooting of original subjects, and the countless ideas one would like to develop if time permitted. This is a disadvantage, but there are advantages—one being that more experience can be gained in film production and construction in three months from a magazine output than in three years in any other branch of production. Secondly, one learns a lot of interesting things about " public taste " by constantly studying reaction to the many varied subjects in the reels.

Whilst engaged upon creating releases for exhibition throughout the country, and the world, which are made to contain a little of everything so that everybody shall be pleased, one realises that nobody can please everybody, but that the surest way of pleasing the largest number of people is to include the smallest amount of intelligent material in the reel. Either that, or strive to srike a happy (or unhappy) medium, and include something for both the intelligent and the unintelligent—which, as you can imagine, demands a most curious form of intelligence to achieve.

●

STAGE AND FILM DIRECTING

LEWIS JACOBS

Before sound, the disturbing realization that the cinema is a unique medium was in the process of crystallization. There were lengthy discussions; and an understanding of movie principles, distinct from theatrical, was slowly maturing. But sound—dialogue—caused a general upheaval. Hollywood froze in the attitude that the movie is the stepchild of the stage. There began a wild rush for stage directors and dramatists to displace film directors and scenarists ; today it is an axiom that, in order to direct a film you must have first directed a stage play!

The stage director may know theatre craft, but Hollywood does not realize that such knowledge is only incidental to the technique of film. The stage director is not equipped to direct a film until he relates his theatrical experiences to the principles inherent in the screen medium. The cinema is not the stage and never will be. Though the two have things in common, they are as different in method and technique as painting is from writing.

On the stage it is a principle that the director's is the ruling mind: he studies the play, chooses the cast, decides its setting and staging, picks his personal assistants, and co-ordinates the separate elements into a personal whole. The finished product is a unit, his individual interpretation and creation. This stage director, when brought to Hollywood, is confronted

with a system—the reverse—which strips him of the individuality and respect for craftsmanship which were the reasons for his success in the theatre. He is put on the set with manufactured " stars ", given writers, technicians and assistants, and ordered to turn out a film the procedure for which his assistants know more about than he. What can the poor stage director do, knowing nothing of the screen medium and paralyzed with fear at the huge studio sets, lighting ensembles, technicians? Take away his capable staff, and the stage director is lost. Helpless before the camera where he should understand its every nuance ; bewildered before lighting and composition of the frame when he should plan beforehand its every mood and shape; a prey to fear in the cutting room where he should command every cut ; employing dialogue where silence would be better ; the director becomes a mouthpiece for his technicians. If he should ask advice, assistants intimidate him to the point where each becomes virtually a dictator of his particular function. Producers dismiss such requests as " artyness " and consequently non-box-office. The ex-stage director is forced either to bluff through by literal reproduction of stage technique or confess ignorance and be sent back to New York, a failure.

Producers expect their imported stage directors to direct films immediately, without training or opportunity to study and comprehend the unique nature of the cinema. There are countless instances of producers refusing to allow their newly recruited stage directors on to the set of another director while shooting, for fear that, in attempting to learn the mechanics, the stage director will lose his " individuality ". In no other art or industry would ignorance of one's craft be encouraged or tolerated—let alone fêted!

In the past seven years, stage methods for the screen have become so standardized and accepted that even film directors who showed promise before sound have become corrupted.

Hollywood's output has become stereotyped in technique and procedure. Were this not so, films would be more varied, individual and stimulating. Producers would no longer be harrassed by the menace of double features, monotony of output, uncertainty of " star " appeal ; nor grope haphazard for " hits " which invariably come as the biggest surprises to those who perpetrate them. Nor would they be as eager for new writers, new locales, and new mechanical contrivances, such as three dimensional photography and technicolour. The film must move forward not because of mechanical developments or the vagaries of producers and " stars ", but because of the skill and intelligence of directors.

The Editors wish to thank regular readers for their appreciation and co-operation. Criticisms and suggestions are invited, in order that "Film Art" may benefit from outside opinion.

Published by courtesy of Messrs. George Newnes Limited.

Pudovkin as Fedya, and Vvedensky, a professional actor,
as the informer.
From *The Living Corpse* by Otsep.

(One of the illustrations from Pudovkin's book, " Film Acting ",
reviewed on page 84).

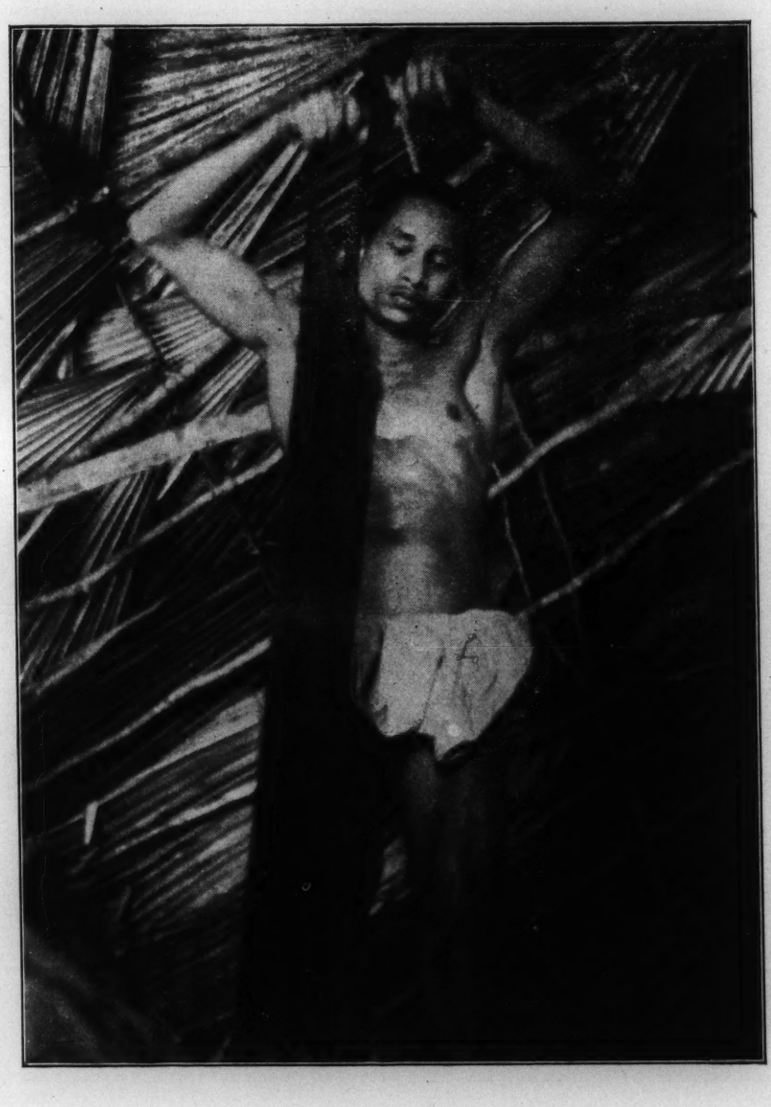
From *JOAN OF ARC.*

Direction—Karl Dreyer.

(In spite of the technical difficulties of the time, the photography of this silent film, compares favourably with that of the latest " Joan " film, *Das Mädchen Johanna,* by Ucicky.)

Angela Salloker in *Das Mädchen Johanna,* a U.F.A. picture directed by Ucicky. An effete picture in contrast to the rigour of Dryer's silent version of the story.

(Film reviewed on p. 83.)



From *THE SONG OF CEYLON*

Direction—Basil Wright.
Production—John Grierson.

(Reviewed on page 76)

THE LOST LEGION OF FILMS

KIRK BOND

To those who still care about the films that now belong to the past, it is always encouraging that somewhere, in some form, one can nearly always find one of the classics being presented, or if not, then the iminent promise of one. The thin red line of interest is often very thin, but it holds, and keeps up one's hopes that eventually it will be reinforced, and the fugitive " revivals " and " subscription series " swell into genuine repertory theatres. At the same time one who has the cause of all old films at heart cannot fail to notice that, although the titles as they are announced (or even cited from time to time as desirable) make a brave and heartening showing, they follow to a large extent a familiar and well-beaten track. There is *Potemkin,* and *Joan of Arc,* and *Faust,* and *Moana,* and *The Birth of a Nation,* and, after these, a few dozen more, only a little less familiar. Every reader will recognise the list.

Only rarely will it branch out, and then it will be satisfied with *Way Down East* and *Dracula.* So customary has this puffing of the old guard become that it seems to me there is considerable danger that through what might be called enforced lack of interest the rest will be lost altogether. Everything depends on a wider public; at present that public has forgotten all films that are not periodically called to its attention. And everyone must have experienced at some time the lethargic indifference of the layman to the " half-dozen good pictures the silent screen produced." But, naturally, it would be difficult to find enough good pictures to make a serious repertory policy practicable.

And, so long as we continue to talk up the *Potemkins* and the *Caligaris,* so long will the public remain indifferent. It is simply a matter of advertising. Consider for a moment what these unknown goods consist of. For one, there is almost the entire body of Swedish cinema, from *Terje Vigen* to the American *Tower of Lies. Gösta Berling* (" Svenska's swan-song ") is remembered for Garbo but that is all. For another there are the Italian films. Guazzoni, Pastrone, D'Annunzio, Antamoro—to Italian critics these names mean something, but to us they are not even familiar as names. Buried too—so buried it is all but impossible to discover their exact history—are the early French works, the products of the theory of photogénie. *Fièvre, El Dorado, La Roue, and Coeur Fidèle* were considered the peaks and they are hardly known today.

Here are whole fields forgotten. But elsewhere the individual losses are as great. Germany, you may think, is familiar if any country is. Yet how many remember *The Burning Acre* and *The Phantom* (Murnau), *Torgus* (Kobe), *The Stone Rider* (Fanck), *Hamlet* (Gade)? *Lupu Pick* is quite forgotten, and most of Berger. Even films like *Destiny, The Street* and *Nju* have joined the legion. As for Russia, Dovjenko is generally passed over, Kuleshov ignored, and the Kino-Eye very sparsely represented. To these must be added the early Kozintseff and Trauberg, Barnet, Raismann, and a number of others, including the Western " Pre-Potemkinites". At the other extreme are a host of avant-garde pieces. Richter and Dulac

are seen seldom enough. What Gremillon did, and Silka, and Florey, and Sandy, and Metzner, and even Eggeling, is forgotten.

In America there are not merely two or three Griffiths, two or three Stroheims, and Chaplin, but some dozen of Griffith, eight Stroheims (counting *The Devil's Passkey*) Ince and De Mille, Fairbanks and Hart, and a long series of glorious romances, charter members of the legion—*The Four Horsemen, Blood and Sand, Smilin' Through, Scaramouche, The Hunchback, Little Old New York, Beau Brummel, The Big Parade.* Besides all of these, there are innumerable documentaries, Oriental films, cartoons, and other miscellaneous things dropped out of sight as if they never existed.

To be sure, obtaining all these is another matter. But that need not deter one from speaking of them, and, even more, thinking of old films in terms of the whole gamut. If, when we discuss the problem, we can have in mind not a heterogeneous handful of hackneyed titles, but the hundreds of films that have actually been made during the past twenty-five years, many of them far superior to what is being done anywhere today, then we can hope to attract in time the larger public on whom repertory must depend. If we insist on clinging to *Potemkin,* we cannot expect the world to drop everything and run to meetings of the Society of Ancient Films.

This is not, indeed, the entire solution. In large part, however, the life of cinema's past depends upon the attitude of modern cineastes. They must think in terms of all cinema, not a few magic names—of film values, not of notoriety—of cinema, not of good movies. Otherwise, there will be no old films.*

The Difficulty of Reviving "FILM CLASSICS"

(A reply to Kirk Bond's "Lost Legion of Films")

VERA LLEWELYN

Organiser, The Forum Cinema, Villiers Street, London.

The young film student of to-day not infrequently asks where he can see the great films of the past, such as Cruze's *Covered Waggon,* Lang's *Metropolis,* Chaplin's *Gold Rush* or Ingram's *Four Horsemen.*

For the legitimate theatre enthusiast it is quite a simple matter to find periodical revivals of the plays of Shakespeare or the early works of John Galsworthy and George Bernard Shaw. Any time of the week one can tune in and listen to any musical divertisement from Mozart's first composition to the latest jazz symphony. Books, painting and ballet—somewhere or other one can find the oldest and the newest for criticism and comparison. Yet the cinema, which is the youngest expression of all the arts, leaves little or no trace of its growth.

The Repertory Cinema has endeavoured to cater for this need, but the policy of presenting revivals is an extremely difficult one to maintain, owing to the fact that there are very few old films left to show. The cinema

* One has known people think this a good thing—as though a film proclaimed excellent in 1925 becomes inevitably a dud in 1935. Why have *new* films anyway? Ed.

exhibitor is entirely in the hands of the renting and producing companies, who do not find it at all practicable to keep their old films. This becomes understandable, when one realises that the film industry in America ranks as the fifth biggest of that country. Statistics show that an important company in this country imports, on an average, some half a million feet of film annually, which will give the reader an idea of the vast quantity of celluloid that leaves the United States, week by week and year by year. Allowing for only 30 copies per film—which is a low estimate—this makes 15 million feet of film per year. This huge output naturally requires a considerable amount of storage space, which in its turn is restricted by fire regulations.

Periodically, as the stock increases, it is sorted out and productions, which have outgrown their popularity and no longer get bookings, are scrapped to make room for others. The reader who thinks that consequently only masterpieces will remain on the shelves, labours under an illusion. Certainly the " worthwhile " films are kept, but only those " worthwhile " to the pundits of renters, namely productions which, in spite of age and repeated exhibition, still continue to take good money all over the country.

Another reason for the scarcity of old films is that the average picturegoer is hardly interested in revivals and is only concerned with the newest sensation from Hollywood and the latest role of their favourite star. The film executives knowing this, continue to pander to the public taste, realising very well that if they ceased to do so, their output would decrease materially, whilst the wheels of the entire film industry would slow down.

The genuine film students are conparatively few in number and the repertory cinemas catering for them are consequently small, so small, that the revenue from their occasional bookings by no means commercially justifies the renters in giving an old film storage room at the expense of a newer one, which will probably play to 3,000 halls.

These are the major grounds for the absence of many well known " film classics " from the programmes of the repertory cinemas. Then there are still some minor reasons, for instance the " life " of a strip of celluloid is by no means indefinite. Continual running through the projectors causes rapid wear and even if stored, unless specially treated, a film soon loses its virtue. The sprocket holes get split and torn and become a considerable source of danger should they foul the projector and catch fire.

It is hardly a recommendation to the young industry that it has not taken care of its masterpieces for the enlightenment of future generations. The leaders should, long ago, have established a film library to which those seriously interested in the cinema could have access to study the development of this new medium of expression from its birth to the present time. Instead it sometimes happens that only by months of diligent searching in the vaults of " junk merchants " or private collections, a precious historic relic can be found . . . and even then it may be too worn to show!

However, to-day there is a more serious interest being taken in the cinema and many people are bginning to realise that however commercialised it may be, it deserves a recognised place among the arts. At least there is a movement afoot to collect and preserve the old museum pieces for posterity, but it rather seems like shutting the stable door after the horse has gone!

REVIEW SECTION

It will be our policy mainly to review films that have not yet been trade-shown in Britain, the merits of which—in our opinion—warrant careful consideration. By so doing we hope to establish a reliable guide for our regular readers and furnish them with such details as may interest them as serious students of the film, some months before instead of some months after the premier presentation.

From time to time, however, we shall also include discussions on films already generally released, because some productions, by their creative force and expert treatment, will escape oblivion and thereby become of cinematic interest to the repertory movement and film societies in general.

THE SONG OF CEYLON.

Direction—Basil Wright.
Production—John Grierson.
Music—Walter Leigh.

Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon* has been received with indifference not because it is a 'documentary', but because it presents an unfamiliar subject in a style contrary to all the popular'isms'. Though *Song of Ceylon* explores half a dozen new ways of using sound and commentary and constructing sequences, no distriutor would take it, while many critics condemned it as dull. The reason for their adjective is that here is a contemplative film which demands a receptive rather than dogmatic mood. It asks the spectator to discard his respect for tramcars, wireless, allure of pseudo-religions of the Theosophical and Buckman-Coglin class, and to watch a very old religion drawing the common daily task within the precepts of Buddha.

Though Buddha is the central theme, this is not a religious film in our western sense. Basil Wright has understood that in Asia religious thought does not commence at the temple door; it is an atmosphere affecting material as well as spiritual things. Though *Song of Ceylon* is a travelogue designed to 'sell more tea', it is remote from the usual "Magic Carpet" trip to foreign climes as the travels of Marco Polo are from a Baedeker handbook. The "Magic Carpet" series makes capital by cataloguing racial pecularities in snappy commentary calculated to appeal to the pun-minded. Supposedly 'exotic' races are sent round the world to compete in oddity with the Lobster-Clawed Man and the Ugliest Woman in the World. But if asked for his history, the Lobster-Clawed Man tells an interesting but not sensational tale, and ends by saying that if the Labour Exchange would let him, he would rather be a worker than an exhibit. He is then more normal, psychologically, than the average film star. Likewise, the customs which appear so freakish in the usual travelogue probably express experience and traditions common to mankind.

Mr. Wright has discarded the sensational. He has selected scenes from native life and arranged them in a pattern and with a rhythm which suggests

the inner as well as outer life in Ceylon. Each episode has been chosen in relation to the idea that the life of Ceylon is given cohesion through the belief in Buddha. Because the reasons for Wright's choice are not always obvious, the film has been called plotless and about nothing.

The structure of the film is musical. It is divided into four movements. Part one, " The Buddha ", is directly concerned with Buddhism. The commentary, an account of Ceylon written in 1680 by Robert Knox, and spoken by Lionel Wendt of Ceylon in a voice as meditative as it is beautiful, says that in course of time Buddha appeared on earth and his worship absorbed the older Devil cult. A pilgrimage of man, women and children observe the glory of Buddha, who, it is said, left this world and passed into Nirvana from the island's highest mountain, Adam's Peak, which bears the imprint of his foot. In part two, " The Virgin Island ", the daily life is shown. Each man labouring for himself but reluctant to hire himself out to another. The fishermen fling out their nets with movements as rythmic as music, the wandering priests beg their rice. In the villages small boys learn the primary steps of the dance which in manhood they will perform in memory of Buddha. Part three, " The Voices of Commerce ". Dispite the invasion of Europeans the traditional ways of agriculture continue. It is the commentary of Part three which imposes the staccato voice of business upon the island's tropical life. Different voices give the account of stocks and shares, orders and invoices, prices and business letters.

In the fourth and last movement, " The Apparel of a God ", the film returns to the traditional and personal aspects of Buddhism. A solitary native comes through the jungle and across the plain to make his small sacrifice of rice to the reclining Buddha at Gal-Vihara. Centuries of tradition have contributed to that single act of devotion, deeply moving in its simplicity. Tradition in ritual form comes in the final and most impressive sequence, the dance in honour of Buddha. Holy lore says that the dancer's robes, the Vess, were designed by God two thousand years ago. Each ornament is symbolical of the thirty-two signs of Buddha. The dance grows ever more extatic until it approaches the climax and is interlocked with rapid shots of the Buddhas seen in the first part; each expresses a different state of meditation. The sound track accompanying these cut-in shots appears to be the most extraordinary twanging of instruments and it perfectly conveys a sense of approaching ecstasy. This ingenious effect was obtained with six gongs in the G.P.O. Unit's London studio. The first was held towards the microphone with the hollow side outwards. Immediately it was struck, the microphone at the other end of the studio was swung forward so that the vibrations were picked up; the track was then run backwards. The dance melts into the opening shots of the jungle with its mysterious tropical vegetation . . . . . .

Song of Ceylon is not a perfect film, there are times when the sequences fail to follow one another with that inevitableness which makes for perfect continuity, but it is a very important attempt at create a picture of an entirely strange life from the native rather than foreign point of view, and to express the tempo of that life in the texture of the film itself.

MARIE SETON.

THE NEW GULLIVER.

Director: A. Ptouchko.

This new Soviet film, which is just being shown in Paris, is a masterpiece of conception and realisation, of perfection in irony and inventive detail. The Liliputian marionettes move and act with exquisite ease. The problem of the dual scale—full-sized young Gulliver with the puppets—has been triumphantly worked out. What enchanting perspectives and vistas this duality gives. A multiplicity of faces was needed for the marionettes; the fullest irony therefore has been developed, the whole film being a biting satire of 18th century Court life. But the main theme is Gulliver's defence of the Liliputian workers, and their revolt, their victory over the tyranny of King and Government.

Three or four scenes stand out in particular. The quarrel in Parliament over what is to be done with Gulliver is a Hogarthian shindy, a most splendid and succulent piece of satire. Léo Swartz wrote the music, and the army's march between Gulliver's legs has a brilliant accompaniment. The scene of the super-modern machines (another fine musical moment) shows that a producer such as Ptouchko can realise the use of the 20th and 18th centuries in the same film—there is not the slightest " out-of-toneness " in the " style-moderne " faces of the workers in contrast with the thoroughly stylised Court physionomies. Gulliver has a great song about the workers of Liliput. And last of all there is the flight of tht half-witted King, his end, dangling from the clock-hand—puppet at last!

How poetic, strong and supple is the music throughout, purposely allusive, here and there, to the great song being sung now all over the Soviets, the Partisanskii, a folk-epic of the Revolution. Gulliver himself is joyously and sensitively played by young Volodya Constantinoff. And the lovely, clear diction of the Russian voices, admirably adapting themselves to the puppets' myriad expressions, adds another reality to this work of art which is as solid as a Hogarth or the satires of Pope. But whereas these two portrayed the vices of their times, Ptouchko has put in one beautiful picture what Swift must always have had in mind—the liberation of the toilers from the grinding tyrannies of outworn, effete, aristocratic decadence.

Swift would indeed have been delighted at seeing this new Gulliver.

Nancy Cunard.

CHAPAEV.

Directors—the brothers Vasiliev.
Photography—Alexandr Segaev and A. Xenophontov.
Music—Gavriil Popov.

Of the small number of films that have made any attempt at three-dimensional characterisation, almost all have introduced their characters fully developed, waiting only for a dramatic situation to reveal them. This is partly the result of the star system which fixes Bergner, Garbo, Veidt, Annabella, each in a personal mould which we either like or hate. But it is true also of films like *La Maternelle* and *Mädchen in Uniform* where the stars are yet unmade. The directors have realised that film must, if it is at all to exploit its other and more visual qualities, use a shorthand method of characterisation.

Chapaev is the progress of a revolutionary. By the end of the film we have come to know Chapaev not with the superficial knowledge of one who sees the finished man, but with an understanding of the growth of this strong-headed, downright character. But the knowledge is won with boredom. The film is dramatic only in incident and has too loose a shape to fit an art which must be taken in one dose. It is well enough for a novel to be as episodic as life, for a book can be taken up and laid down at will. We accumulate the experience slowly as, by shared experiences here and there, we get to know our friends. *Chapaev* is of this kind, haphazard and life-like with only occasional conformity to the restrictions of film.

There is a tremendous amount of talk, but the incidents are, on the whole, visually enough conceived to be understood without titles. There are good moments of broad, active humour, where Chapaev is demonstrating with apples and a pipe the movement of an army, and where he breaks a chair in a fit of temper. These incidents have the animal energy which the Russians put into all their arts, into their photography and choice of types, and which makes a Russian film, even when slow and badly constructed, more exhilarating than anything that can possibly be forced in the Hollywood hot-house or in the manor-house gardens of Elstree and Shepherds Bush.

Because its characters have obvious weaknesses, Chapaev frees itself from the sentimental idealism which is apt to overlay Eisenstein's symbolic types. On the other hand it avoids the humane sentimentalism which Hollywood achieves every time it attempts, as in *Little Man What Now,* to give its characters roundness. The best moment in the film is a model of restraint. The colonel is playing Chopin. His orderly, whose brother's death sentence the colonel has just repealed, sways to the music. Later we see that a scrubbing brush is tied to one foot and his swaying has as much to do with floor-scrubbing as with Chopin. A shot. The orderly pauses. The colonel makes a scarcely perceptible sign of emotion. The work continues.

I. N.

A LITTLE FILM OF A BIG CITY.

(A symphonic impression of Düsseldorf)

Directed by WALTER RUTTMANN.*

Shortly the abstract-documentary film *Kleiner Film einer grossen Stadt,* produced by the well-known German cameraman Walter Ruttmann, will receive its premier presentation. This is a simple portrait of a beautiful city, dealing with the life and the movement, the indulgence and the satiety, the elegance and the labour of this famous Rhenish town. It is a song of the people and the clouds, the sprinkling fountains in the parks and the winding stairs of old houses; a documentary of famous people, past and present.

---

* Walter Ruttmann, now at the end of 40, is one of the most distinguished of German cameramen. Born in Frankfurt, he—like Renoir—came to the film via painting and music. Has always been a fighter for the honest and clean film; the film of culture. Among his best known works are his 4 operas, but he established himself with " Symphonie einer Weltstadt " which he made in 1927 from a scenario by Karl Mayer and under the camera supervision of Karl Freund, which was later set to music by Edmund Meisel. One of his last films was a documentary of the Italian Steel Works at Terni.

The city speaks to you from the film. It is not a postcard album with a running commentary, but a rhythmic pattern imposed on nature. It might be called a symphonic impression of Düsseldorf. In their relation and interrelation the pictures produce a continuity of collective incidents, that are governed pictorially by the exquisite use of light and shade, and compose themselves into a unified whole.

The scenario is simple and straightforward and beautifully balanced, developing along smooth lines:—

Gay cutting for the carnival scenes at the beginning. The dance of the buffoons, the masks, interspersed with the joke of the "Büttenredner" (speech delivered from a tub turned upside down). Then fresh masks: earnest, hard, staggering; masks of the dead, the great of Düsseldorf, such as Immermann, Brahms, Rethel and Schadow. In between crosses, cemeteries. A large cross rises from the plain: Schlageter![1]). Again transition; streaming, surging light between the shades. Waving cornfields, tulips in the wind, sailing clouds, the countryside, in which the town is bedded. Clouds and stream, stream and clouds. Sailing boats, cargo steamers and overseas liners. Dock impressions: pictures of the Lower Rhine, Schnellenburg, the embankment at Kaiserswerth. The play of light round the old and the new architecture of Düsseldorf, round Kaiserswerth and Benrath, round the gables and the roofs of the old city, round the palaces of industry. A view from the Wilhelm-Marx-Haus-Tower, a long distance shot to the Rhine and the hills of the Grafenberger Forest.

Then a change of focus: Marching sharpshooters in morning coat and top hat; festivities, splendour. Cutting to a picture of the Königsallee with its statues and busts. On to sculptors at work and a transfusion to the artistic Düsseldorf; a flying visit to the art studios.

Finally across to creative work, the mainstay of the city: the working classes, the miners and machine workers, the lock-smiths and joiners, the glass blowers and boiler makers. Here the fire blazes high in the workshops, only to die away to a warm, soft glow, a dear and trusted light to the workers.

Then comes the final cresendo and climax: Fireworks in the nightly Düsseldorf and illumination on the Rhine; comets, falling stars and rockets. Düsseldorf, City of Light . . . .

J. C. M.

THE INFORMER.

Director—John Ford.

Whatever may have been the merits of the old silent picture starring Lya de Putti, there is no doubt that John Ford's talking version of O'Flaherty's story reproduces all the violence, the filth, the waste and the bitter logic of the novel. It is unusual for an author to be served so well by the scenarist.

---

[1] Albert Leo Schlageter was Germany's foremost propagandist during the Rhine and Ruhr occupation by the Allies. The French accused him of being an agitator, and after a trial for high treason, which was not without prejudice, he was shot as a rebel. Since loyalty to his country was his only crime, Albert Leo Schlageter has to-day become one of Germany's post-war heroes.

The picture is notable for its rediscovery of Maclaglan as a front-rank film actor, and for its skilful use of a musical background that reveals but seldom obtrudes. The Dublin of the period is reconstructed with such meticulous and accurate realism that one is startled by such minor and unimportant aberrations as the faces of the young Republican soldiers lining the walls at the Court-martial and at a display of paper money that is five or six years before its proper time.

A fine, vigorous, rip-roaring picture that wavers only in its last line.

DENIS JOHNSTON.

TONI

Directed by JEAN RENOIR.

A French Independent Film that France can be proud of. It is photographed unpretentiously in the Midi forests of France and is acted by people who know how to obey their director. The story deals with the forced intermarriage of two races. It has a tragic ending, and the final shots in contrasts are extremely moving. According to a French critic this is " one hour and three quarters of what can be called pure film ". This is hardly an exaggeration. If the heroine's eyebrows had not been plucked and there had been half an hour less film, I would certainly have agreed with him. Renoir is a director who is not afraid to let his characters talk; he inclines to let them talk too long. The photography is superb and the cutting adequate. It is one of the most perfect films France has produced.

BRIAN MONTAGU.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S " PYGMALION ".

Manuscript by Oberländer & Wassermann.
Direction by Erich Engels.
With Gustav Gründgens, Jenny Jugo *and* Eugen Klöpfer.

This film is bound to be shown in England some day, if only on the strength of the author's name. As might be expected, *Pygmalion* is filmed theatre; yet the filmic element is noticeable in the intimate relationship that exists between the acting material. It gives relief to the film. The camera also shades and tints and has the advantage of the very finest nuances.

The film is purely intellectual, but hardly cinematic, art, brilliantly enlivened by the performance of Gustav Gründgens as Professor Higgins. His play of mimics considerably aids the optical qualities of the film. Remarkably sure he is in the sharpness of his mockery. A brilliant study in cynicism, but his effortlessness is almost too effortless.

Jenny Jugo plays the flower girl from the slums with great virtuosity and Eugen Klöpfer takes the part of the drunken father.

The Whitechapel dialect has been translated into the Viennese.

Erich Engels direction is as might be expected under the circumstances an exact mathematical problem.

That the play is cool, is the fault of the author.

It is interesting to note that after G.B.S. refused to allow an English Company to film the play, he gave a Continental studio permission to do so.—Ed.

NOTE FROM FRANCE.

The Soviet have had a successful season here, and during the past months some interesting films have been shown. Among others the masterly production of *Dishonour,* directed by Yutkewitsch and Ermler. This is a 100% sound film, the sound production of which is clear and plastic. The musical score is by D. Schostakowitsch, who makes use of electrical instruments, and for the first time in the history of the cinema the musical accompaniment is on the same high plane as that of the film, which is notable for its camera technique.

Another film is Jan Sascha's reportage *The Great Experiment.* The director, by the aid of expertly applied montage, has endeavoured to show the advantages the revolution has brought to the Russian system of government. The central object of the film is the gigantic Djnepr dam. In the film an exaggerated value is placed on the technical equipment to the neglect of the purely human values—a not uncommon mistake of the Soviet doctrine.

J. C. M.

NOTE FROM AMERICA.

Anna Karenina, made by Clarence Brown for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, proves that a burdensome production cost sheet can be a handicap in realising a good film. Almost a million dollars were spent in making Tolstoy's novel " live again " in this highly polished rehash of the old story. Garbo is presented as the poor, benighted Anna, and Fredric March as a ever-so-dashing Vronsky. This novel might have inspired an imaginative director. Not so Clarence Brown. The result is a colourless, cold affair—sticky where it should be tender—melodramatic where it should be tragic. It is as obvious as a dozen other pictures and reflects no more the earthy spirit of the novel than a patently manufactured scenario would at the hands of some Hollywood hack. The sets never give the impression of middle nineteenth century Russia (always succeeding in looking like the glittering backgrounds to stupendous musical revues), and there is a saccharine epilogue that would have made Tolstoy rage.

Karl Freund's picturisation of Maurice Renard's old shocker, *The Hands of Orlac,* retitled *Mad Love* again shows up both Hollywood and the talking pictures. When the silent version of this story appeared some ten years ago, starring Conrad Veidt and Fritz Kortner, directed by Robert Wiene, you had a real Grand Guignol film, with a consistently maintained macabre atmosphere, telling lights and shadows and stylised acting that fitted into the eerie compositions. All the elements in the film—acting, settings and direction—were fused into a unity. Like the best German films, the silent *Hands of Orlac* was a stream of image-strengthened light. The present Hollywood talking version, *Mad Love,* is one of those shockers that cannot differentiate the macabre and the grotesque from the repulsive and the vulgar. It is choppy, episodic and interspersed with utterly unfunny " comic relief ". (An insidious requisite of all " heavy " scenarios most always resulting in " relief from comedy"). Peter Lorre, a sensitive and intelligent actor, struggles valiantly with the part of the paranoiacal surgeon, but the scenario and direction are too much even for him. That

this fine screen player should have had to make his American debut in so cheap a horror film as *Mad Love* would be insupportable were it not for the encouraging thought that his next picture is to be *Crime and Punishment,* in which he will play Raskolnikow.

The most important film of the winter in America will be Charlie Chaplin's long awaited comedy, *Modern Times.* This will be reviewed in the next issue.

HERMAN G. WEINBERG.

FILM INDEX

JAZZ COMEDY (Direction—Alexandroff). This riotous film was reviewed in *film art* 4, but a word is needed in praise of its photography whose flatness has been considered incompetence. It is impossible to be realistic and also funny, and the fantasy must extend beyond the incident to the line itself. Actually this black and white photography, which eliminates all perspective and sends one away with a curious sense that one has been watching a series of drawings and not people at all, shows just what it is that Rene Clair (whatever he may also have gained) has lost since *Crazy Ray* and *The Italian Straw Hat.* There is little sense in learning *how* to attain perfect colour correction in photography unless we learn also *when.*

DAS MÄDCHEN JOHANNA. An Ufa film, directed by Gustav Ucicky. Camera by Gunther Krampf. Does not compare favourably with the "Joan" produced by Dreyer in 1927, and sound has not added to the dramatic value. The camerawork seems artificial if one remembers Rudolph Maté's work; Angela Salloker, as the Maid, never reaches the height Madama Falconetti attained.

Between the overacting of Heinrich George as the Duke of Burgundy and Erich Ponto as Lord Talbot, stands out the performance of Gustav Gründgens as the Dauphin Charles VII, a simple and powerful portrait. To his perfect diction, in which he has no equal, he adds simplicity of gesture and perfectly timed movement. The slightest inuendo becomes effective and the minutest nuance achieves meaning.

THE VOICE OF BRITAIN (Production Grierson). Competent and informative. The witches in *Macbeth* have never, with all the romantic trappings of the stage, appeared so eerie as they do, in modern dress, floating through space before a microphone. The boat race is more exciting and less English than it ever is on the course. Some of the dissolves are ludicrous, though there is an aptness in the spokesmen of our age (Macdonald, Baldwin and Co.) appearing to us from the clouds!

THE COLOUR BOX by Len Lye (Production Grierson)—*No camera used. Almost* succeeds in giving visual events without shape, having only texture and tone. Interesting to note that, in spite of the very proper rapidity of incident, the eye could recognise the means used to make the shapes, *e.g.* colour perforations used as stencils. An enjoyable experiment; but would-be followers should remember this is an easy type of film to do badly. (R.A.F.)

KRACH UM YOLANTHE, directed by Carl Froehlich, with Albert Lieven of *Reifende Jugend* as the schoolmaster. A film of the country, quite up to pre-Nazi level. Local colouring well observed.

PENSION MIMOSA, directed by Jaques Feyder, shows all the qualities and weak points of the Director. The film is slow, but beautiful in detail. Feyder's wife, Françoise Rosay, plays the lead.

DUDOV of "Kühle Wampe" has made a film of "The Little Man" entitled *Seifenblasen*. An "avant-garde" product with humour, a rare combination nowadays. The film suffers from over-accentuation.

MATER DOLOROSA, a French film directed by Abel Gance. Undiluted sensationalism of "The Spy" variety, based on a serial. Elementary in content. Notwithstanding the impossible subject, the film shows traces of imaginative direction.

GAUMONT BRITISH CINE-MAGAZINES (Direction Andrew Buchanan). Remain the best example of intelligent film journalism—one magazine a week and five items a magazine! *Palm Mystery* opens well with a quick impression of hands at work and play. There is also a Conference in which Nelson Keys, as Chairman, addresses himself as various delegates, a study in quick-cut contrasts of an impersonator with himself which leaves the stage standing. *Doctor's Orders* contains two good examples of straight-forward informative filming.

GUESTS OF THE NATION, a 16mm film (4 reels) by Denis Johnston, acted by members of the Dublin Gate Theatre. Meanders slowly amongst beautiful lighting effects and impeccable composition. The drama is lost in bad timing. The characters are real but move, partly in consequence, too slowly. The climax is simple and forceful enough to justify much of the tedious detail on which it depends.

BOOK REVIEWS

Pudovkin, in "Film Acting" (Newnes, 7/6d.) attacks the exponents of the "type" actor in film—*i.e.* the stylised figure who always plays a given rôle, villain, hero, etc., and who becomes, at his shallowest, the "star". He puts an end, also, to the fallacy that there is no such thing as film acting. This fallacy comes not from Russia, where "natural actors" (actors playing themselves) are used together with trained actors, but from the so-called "advance guard" who force Russian theory into unreasoned absurdities. Pudovkin shows that there is most emphatically a technique of film acting, but that it has very little anology with the technique of the stage.

Pudovkin's approach to cinema has always been from the soul outward, from the individual human emotion in vocal and facial expression to the necessity for making compromises with the outer world. He realises himself that there are other methods: "Certainly the cinema too is capable of production in conventionalised style, style abstracted from direct representation of reality; certainly the cinema also is capable of generalisation, can develop it to any degree, even to the limit of the supreme antithesis

black and white". But film acting to him means primarily the representation of a living, growing individual fitted into the limits of the art. He has made an exhaustive research into the means of obtaining this representation ; yet research is too cold a word. The book is exciting because it is personal and practical ; it explains why Pudovkin has so often succeeded in a task which other directors find impossible, the creation on the screen of a three-dimensional character. There are directors who understand the medium of the film as well as he ; there are none with his understanding of people.

The book is expensive for its size. The publishers are evidently trading on the fact that nobody seriously interested in films will be able to do without it. The translation is by Ivor Montagu, and there are a generous number of stills from Pudovkin's own films.

I. N.

After Pudovkin, Bryher, Rotha and Arnheim comes Raymond Spottiswoode with *Grammar of the Film* (Faber & Faaber 10/6d.)

" This systematic study of the principles of film technique " (to quote the publishers) just misses the mark and fails to throw new light on matters of cinematic interest. It has neither the clarity of Rotha's *Film Till Now,* nor the scientific-analytical value of Arnheim's *Film als Kunst.* Above all, however, the book lacks unity. The author is inclined to jump from one subject to another, leaving the reader with the feeling that he has not properly prepared the ground for his material The result is very conflicting.

In the absence of fresh theories, Mr. Spottiswoode has thought of subdividing old ones, thereby attempting to give them new meaning. Thus, for instance, he believes he has succeeded in giving the mysterious term " montage " the clear connotation that it needs, by dividing it into 1) primary, 2) simultaneous, 3) rhythmical, 4) secondary, 5) implicational and 6) ideological montage. All of which serves no purpose.

Although the author has the whole field of the sound film at his disposal, he declines the opportunity to make ample use of it. He also follows the by now common procedure of decrying the American film. Some day, may be, a writer will have the courage to champion the Hollywood product which, notwithstanding its gross vulgarity and mock sentimentality, seems to be the only film progressing, since the Americans are willing to learn from their mistakes, whereas the advance-guard movement remained stationary and has failed to move with the times.

Mr. Spottiswoode quotes various prominent figures in the film industry, amongst others our former editor Mr. B. Vivian Braun. This would give us great pleasure, were we not convinced that B.V.B's definition of the film " The real film is the visual poem " was not written for reference purposes.

In between the literary headings above the various chapters, however, the serious student will find some worthwhile observations which will assist him in visualising the true properties of the cinema as a medium of expression.

The chart at the end is an education in itself.

J. C. M.

In " The Arts Today " (The Bodley Head, 8/6d.), John Grierson contributes 30 pages on the cinema. The article shows his habitual, tough common-sense. Those of us who love to dream of better worlds are warned that we must wake up and face the facts. He admits the film's deficiencies, but credits it also with too much good. He includes an entertaining analysis of the aims and occupations of characters in films, indulges in a disproportionate amount of advertising for the G.P.O. unit, and makes the delightful observation that " the only critic in England who has taken the proper measure of the movies is Mr. St. John Ervine."

It is impossible to agree with all he says, but his words reflect his own admirable struggle to reconcile the high ideals of art with the film world's corrupt necessity.

The book also contains articles on psychology and art, poetry, painting and sculpture, fiction, music, theatre and architecture. Arthur Calder-Marshall, in his article on fiction, says, " The purpose of all art is fundamentally to delight: but it is not to entertain. Confusion often arises between the many novels produced for entertainment and those few which are works of art." Substitute " film " for " novel " and these words should be written large above the desks of the daily film critics. It is they who are responsible for the public misunderstanding which seems inevitable to ensue when one is boldly harsh to *Man of Aran* and rather easier to some musical comedy featuring Fred Astaire. They forget that the one film is expected to measure up to exactly spaced mental tensions, the other to fit in loosely with an evening's proportion of fun.

I. N.

CORRESPONDENCE

We receive each quarter a number of letters from our readers relating to various problems and aspects of the cinema. Owing to lack of space, we regret that we are unable to publish each letter received, but we shall endeavour, in future numbers, to give attention to one or two of the most interesting.

The letter under consideration in this issue comes from Mr. Horace Farquharson, who writes:—

> " . . . avoid like the plague all jargon not understood by the ordinary public—such as myself.
>
> Such word as " montage " are Greek to most of us, and fill us with positive *aversion*. I notice that lately the critic in a well-known paper described how he had been first caught in this technical verbiage—but had learned wisdom, and had now grown out of all such childishness."

We agree with Mr. Farquharson that it is best to avoid technical terms where everyday equivalents exist; unfortunately this is not always possible, as the language of the cinema is deplorably inadequate. Certain terms, many of which are imported, stand for a " successive or collective form of action and/or movement " and as such cannot be expressed in a single word, unless a new one be coined.

For the guidance of Mr. Farquharson and other puzzled readers, we append a glossary of a few of the most important film terms and their definitions.

Suggested definitions and suggestions of words needing definition, are welcomed.

DEFINITIONS.

cut: (*n.*) a break in the continuity of space and/or time.

director: author; *not* part collaborator.

document: the test of applicability for this ill-used word must surely lie in the director's purpose—*is he intended to teach,* or merely to describe? The dividing line between a document and a descriptive essay, an advertisement or fiction must remain vague; but we may as well know what particular quality we are considering when we call a film a document. To allow the word to cover all non-studio films is to allow an arbitrary, technical division to assume more importance than one of fundamental purpose. (*Note*: Why " documentary " and " documentary film?" Why not just " document " and " film document?").

editing: arranging shots in articulate (we hope) sequence. (Editing may, but need not, be also montage.)

editor: the man who arranges the shots. The word, of course, should be unnecessary except to describe the compiler of news reels or other historical and statistical films. As soon as there is selection or arrangement the director must be his own editor.

montage: arrangement of *visual* scenes in such a way that an *abstract concept* is created between them. (Certain writers would like to extend the meaning of this word to include the whole assembly and shooting of raw material. Since " production " is a good word to cover this whole activity, the extension of " montage " a pretentious word in itself but useful in its restricted, creative meaning, seems unnecessary.)

producer: the general organiser of a whole film unit, who deals with all kinds of technical and financial details outside the scope of the actual maker, who is the director.

production: the whole making of a film, including every creative, financial and technical detail from the first thought in the mind of the director (or profiteer) to the making of the last print from the cut negative.

shot: a length of film in which neither the space nor time continuity, nor both, are broken.

DEFINITIONS WITH A DIFFERENCE:

One of our brighter film critics described the censor as one who would like to put trousers on a cart horse.

The difference between an amateur and a professional is that the joins get better as the cuts get worse. (Acknowledgement to J.S.M.)

AN ANSWER TO S. M. EISENSTEIN'S LETTER TO DR. GOEBBELS.

(*See film art No.* 5.)

Dear S. M. Eisenstein,

Truth is not an isolated point, and history gives reason to suppose that its graph is laid on the axes of time and place. Certainly it is possible for me to disagree with your propagandist bias in art, and yet to realise that for you, in Russia today, it is an attitude positively demanded. Perhaps I should

say "yesterday", for already there are signs (in *Jazz Comedy* and *St. Petersburg*) that you have left behind not only the destructive propaganda of *Potemkin,* but even the constructive propaganda of *General Line.* This letter is not intended, therefore, as an attack against the Russian method of approach. That would be mere presumption. I am concerned only with your implication that propaganda with the force of a *Potemkin* cannot possibly emanate from Germany.

Potemkin, that vast animated poster which was the object of Dr. Goebbels' admiration, sells its ideas because you realised that the strips of celluloid are themselves more real than any abstract ideals of liberty they represent. You have used the various shots as an orator uses words, not presenting them for rational inspection, but as emotional projectiles hurled against an audience's normal apathy. By your development of visual rhetoric you have made obsolete the art of oratory, at least as a means toward persuading the uneducated.

Yet *Potemkin* is valid only so long as Dr. Goebbels, and others who disagree with its ideals, still exist. You in Russia must realise better than we that when *Potemkin* and the forces that built it have succeeded, then the use for them will be gone and only the mechanics of the film will remain, an interesting study, but dead as Pascal's wranglings with the Jesuits.

In a work of art the implication is not questioned, but only its identification with the outward shape. In *Potemkin* the implication thrusts itself upon the spectators and demands that they concur. I am not concerned at the moment with the comparative values of art and propaganda, but only with your own admission, implicit in the making of *Potemkin,* that there are people needing conversion. It is not unreasonable to suppose that these infidels may themselves hold ideas which they want to impose upon you. Strange as it appears, there are Germans who believe most sincerely in the Nazi regime. The failure of their cinema so far is due to a weakness not of cause but of rhetorical power. The German cinema, up to the time of the dictatorship, was the work of Pabst and a few others who have now gone. For Dr. Goebbels' oratorical purpose these banished directors would have been in any case too slow and intellectual. *Kameradschaft* and *Westfront* 1918 were very logical dialectic. The German cinema has still to learn to persuade without relying upon reason. It is possible that in time it will achieve a piece of film propaganda which, even if ineffectual in reasoned retrospect, will have at least an emotional power of persuasion. If they do not produce a *Potemkin,* it will not be the result of Nazi barbarity, but only the accident of birth which made the modern Anthony a Russian.

All this does not imply that social conditions are unimportant to the artist. Spiritually and materially they are of the highest importance, and particularly in an art like film which is communal and demands that the audience shall express a need before any work is done. You in Russia have been too much concerned with reconstructing society to create art except as a plaything—a little twenty-minute masterpiece like *Romance Sentimentale.* It was necessary at first that your great films should be *Potemkins* and *General Lines.* But any other nation with a purpose (and Germany is certainly that) would be capable, with a director like yourself, of building such films. When

you in Russia are able to work *in* freedom and not towards it (as Pudovkin did in *Mother,* which, in spite of its ending, does not teach a single ultimate right, but presents the struggle between two possible courses of action), when, that is, the audience are artists in perception demanding artists in execution, then you will indeed have achieved the thing that Goebbels, given a hundred Eisensteins, could not do—since his ideal is the abstract concept, Germany, and yours the very real people—and since it is the minds of the people that must condition so vast an art as film.

Hoping that day is as near as recent developments seem to show.

Yours etc., IRENE NICHOLSON.

FILM SOCIETIES

(Secretaries of Film Societies are invited to supply us with Notes for this Section.)

LONDON.

The Film Society (Sec.: 56, Manchester Street, W.1.) Expensive unless you are a student or technician; shows latest continental films with little discrimination.

North London Film Society (Hon. Sec.: 6, Carysfort Road, Stoke Newington, N.16) Subscription 12/6d. for season of 6 performances and lectures. Nov. 3—first English performance of *Le Vampyre* by Carl Dreyer.

Children's Film Society (The Everyman Cinema, N.W.3.) 6 performances for 5/-. Aims to have good films and good fun. Visits to projection room during season.

London Film Institute Society (Hon. Sec.: 92, Upper Thames Street, E.C.4. Full membership (£1 1s.) includes all publications of the British Film Institute, a comprehensive London film guide (monthly), lectures and meetings at reduced prices, information and advice. Associate Membership 2/6d. does not include the B.F.I. publications. Forthcoming lecturers include Ivor Montagu, Alistair Cooke and Rene Clair.

The Imperial Film Club (4, Chester Place Mews, S.W.1.) Supports British Films (that such an institution should be necessary implies a weakness). Not financially supported but wholly voluntary. Membership all over the world. British branch holds dances, theatre visits etc.

SOUTHAMPTON.

Southampton Film Society (Hon. Sec.: 10, Golden Square, London, W.1.) Films this season will probably include *Le Dernier Milliardaire, The Testament of Dr. Mabuse,* and *Hey Rup.* The Society has a branch organisation for the recruiting of members in Winchester.

HULL.

Hull Film Art Club (Hon. Sec.: 81, Beverley Road, Hull.) Presents silent films. Season opens November 13 and will include *The Ghost that never returns* and *The Covered Wagon.*

OXFORD.

Oxford University Film Society—The last three programmes for the Michaelmas Term include *The Road to Life, Lac aux Dames* and *Reka.*

COMMENT

London filmgoers can look forward to some interesting programmes during the season. The Forum Cinema, Villiers Street, announces a Russian season beginning October 24th. Many of the films promised have been previously shown in England only privately or on sub-standard stock. The Forum is to be congratulated on bringing such films as *Bed and Sofa, The Deserter* and *October* for the first time before the general public; while the young generation who, through the curious whims of the Censor, have been allowed to see *Potemkin, Storm over Asia* and *New Babylon* only in poor prints of reduced size, should welcome the opportunity of studying these films in more normal circumstances.

The Academy Cinema will follow *Jazz Comedy* with *Episode,* a film starring Paula Wessely who gave a competent performance in *Maskerade.* These films are all distributed by Reunion Films, a company which is already making advances against the Hollywood monopoly of the provinces. This company's good work may be the beginning of a more general recognition that films do sometimes come from other centres than Hollywood, Shepherd's Bush and Elstree.

The Song of Ceylon, one of the completest impressions of a people's life which has yet been made, has been scorned by private cinemas and general distributors alike. The Curzon Cinema, has done excellent work, not only in showing it, but in advertising it on equal terms with the studio film in the same programme, an honour rarely conferred on the despised "documentary". That this film cannot be shown all over the provinces is just one instance of the appalling stupidity and insensibility of the film industry.

The Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, reopened during the summer as a repertory cinema. Unfortunately its revivals have been confined to "star" attractions, a type of film which ages more quickly than any other. Stars whose appeal is entirely "fashionable" look inevitably a little jaded in last season's hat and last season's mannerism. It is a pity that repertory cinemas (and distributors, and film financiers also) cannot realise that films like *Caligari* or *Tabu* or *Mother* are younger and fresher today than the films of Queen Christina or any of the other ill-used royalties who have served their turn as mannequins and are then forgotten.

Kino Films, 84, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1., who have an excellent selection of Russian "Classics" on 16 and 9.5 mm stock, announce that their films may now be hired for 4/- per reel per day. Besides the old brigade of Russian films, Kino Films have a number of short documents of social conditions in England and in Russia.

Lewis Jacobs, one of the editors of *Experimental Cinema,* has been making a film of the Hopi Indians in Arizona. These Indians, living in stone houses hundreds of years old, do their shopping by mail order catalogue and own motor cars. Advance stills show types of a heavy, sensual beauty reminiscent of those in *Thunder Over Mexico.* We hope that film audiences outside America may have an opportunity of seeing this film. Lewis Jacobs writes that he is now "giving a course in film writing for dramatists and literary people and at the same time trying to develop a film group somewhat on the order of Baker's workshop of Harvard and Yale before the Broadway stage went Hollywood."

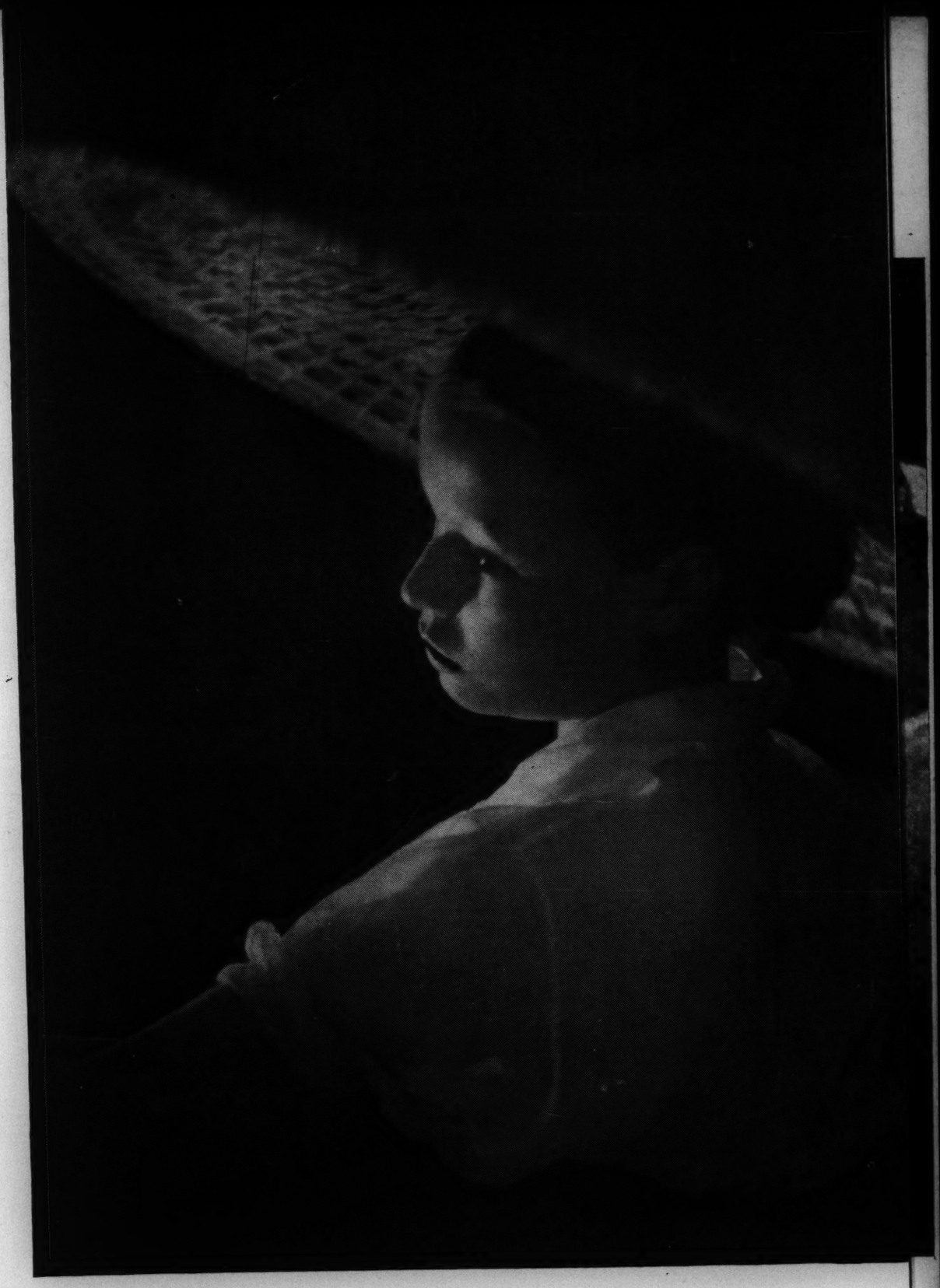
Fritz Lang is now in Hollywood under contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. He is to direct *Mob Rule,* story by Norman Krasna. Fritz Lang's direction has improved from film to film, and there is no trace left in *M* of the technical exploitations appearing in *Metropolis.* It is hoped that Hollywood will not force him back to the grand and empty manner.

"The Ideal Husband," by Oscar Wilde, is being filmed in Germany with Brigitte Helm and Sybille Schmitz. Brigitte Helm's formal clarity should suit Oscar Wilde. It is doubtful whether Wilde, the conversational fencer, will suit the film.

A short film, *A Ray of Sunshine,* featuring Sir Seymour Hicks, has been made as propaganda for the Greater London Fund and the National Institute for the Blind. It runs 4½ minutes and includes shots of a Sunshine Home for Blind Babies and a workshop. Further particulars are obtainable from The National Institute for the Blind, 224, Great Portland Street, London, W.1.

Printed in Great Britain by A. Graves, 8/10 Stanhope Street, London, N.W.1.

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY



Mrs. Constant Lambert

URSULA HARTLEBEN

30 DORSET STREET,
LONDON, W.1.

Telephone: WELbeck 3717.

THE FORUM

Commencing October 24

Great Season of

SOVIET FILMS

Including

STORM OVER ASIA
NEW BABYLON
BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN
GHOST THAT NEVER RETURNS
BED AND SOFA
THE DESERTER
OCTOBER

FORUM CINEMA
Villiers Street, Strand
London, W C 2
Tel.: Temple Bar 3931

THE
CHELSEA
STUDIO CLUB
183B KING'S ROAD, S.W.3.

ARTISTS — PHOTOGRAPHERS
ARCHITECTS — OPERATIVES
DESIGNERS — ACTORS
DECORATORS — SCULPTORS
WRITERS

APPLY TO SECRETARY
FOR PARTICULARS

Dine outside and watch the world pass by.
Our Brazier will keep you warm.

THE LOMBARD
RESTAURANT
65, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, S.W.3.
London's Only Boulevarde Cafe
Telephone: FLAxman 8619.

TABLE D'HOTE AND A LA CARTE
OPEN UNTIL AFTER MIDNIGHT

GAMES ROOM. Billiards, Pin Tables, Bridge etc.
OPEN TO ALL CUSTOMERS.

Luncheon 1/6
Dinner 2/6
Special 3 course Supper 1/6

BIG OPEN FIRES.

american cinema
for international films

★

LITTLE THEATRE
directed by Herman G. Weinberg

presents

THE BEST INTERNATIONAL FILMS, BOTH LONG & SHORT, IN EXISTENCE.

special agents for 'film art'
—international cinema review

★

FIVE TWENTY THREE, NORTH HOWARD STREET, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND !

u.s.a.

SIGHT AND SOUND

A QUARTERLY REVIEW — SIXPENCE — FULLY ILLUSTRATED

Special Features in the Autumn Issue Now Ready

ALEXANDRA DANILOVA—Classical Ballet and the Cinema.
HARRY PRICE—Ghost Hunting with a Cine-Camera.
FREDERICK EVANS—War and Child Opinion.
F. HEMING VAUGHAN—Organising a Branch.
CHARLES GRAHAM—Acting for the Films in 1912.
MARY FIELD—Making the Past Live.
ALISTAIR COOKE—Reviews of Films of the Quarter.
A. VESSELO—Reviews of Continental Films and New Documentaries.
Book Reviews.
News from Societies.
Film Institute Activities.
TECHNICAL AND TRADE:
Western-Electric-Kodak High Speed Motion Picture Timing System.
Evolution of Cinematography.

FILMS AND THE SCHOOL: A Section for Teachers.

Published by THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

Tel: Museum 0607/8. — 4, Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1. — Tel: Museum 0607/8.

---

the everyman theatre

opp. Hampstead tube station

●

NOW HAMPSTEAD'S INTIMATE REPERTORY CINEMA

showing acclaimed master-pieces from all countries engaged in production

SPECIALLY SELECTED SHORTS

agents for 'film art'

send your name and address for inclusion in mailing list

Hampstead 2285

under the direction of J. S. FAIRFAX-JONES

WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS PLEASE MENTION

film art

From the Film *Hopi*
Directed and photographed by

LEWIS JACOBS

in Indian Reservation, Arizona, U.S.A.
with an all native cast.

LEFT REVIEW

edited by EDGELL RICKWORD

The monthly in which Literature and Art join with the British working class movements for the defence of culture against fascism and war.

6D.

LEFT REVIEW has published recently:

Storm Jameson on *England in* 1942 and *Crisis,* Speech by Bernard Shaw (*January*).

February issue: T. H. WINTRINGHAM and BENITO MUSSOLINI on *War, Death in the Marsh* (written in a concentration camp), *Poem* by Sylvia Townsend Warner, Drawings by John Farleigh and James Boswell Fitton Holland.

" Of course, he is not really class conscious like ourselves."

SEND 7s. to LEFT REVIEW 7 John St., Theobald's Rd., W. C. 1. and you will receive " L. R." for 1 year.

Vol. One (1935), in cloth, 6/9

March: Special article on THE CINEMA

DECORATION

is a monthly magazine devoted to every aspect of the planning, furnishing, decoration and equipment of the home. It is lavishly produced and illustrated in colour and black and white, and in its new and enlarged form is acknowledged to be the leading publication in its own field.

For those interested in current ideas, for those planning new homes and for those who wish to put new life into the homes which they already have DECORATION provides a fund of ideas and an index of contemporary taste.

MONTHLY

1/6

Subscription

12 issues - 18/-
(postage free 21/-)

6 issues - 9/-
(postage free 10/6)

From leading Newsagents or direct from the publishers

Mayfair Press, Ltd., Crown House, 143, Regent Street, London, W.1.

The Journal that speaks to a Continent

ARGENTINA
BRAZIL
BOLIVIA
CHILE
COLOMBIA
COSTA RICA
CUBA
ECUADOR
EL SALVADOR
GUATEMALA
HONDURAS
HAITI
MEXICO
NICARAGUA
PERU
PANAMA
PARAGUAY
SANTO DOMINGO
URUGUAY
VENEZUELA

LATIN-AMERICAN WORLD

An authorative illustrated monthly review of Anglo-Latin-American affairs.

A special section is edited for Spanish-speaking readers.

PRICE ONE SHILLING

Write for Specimen Copy to:

LATIN-AMERICAN WORLD,
93 & 94 Chancery Lane,
W.C.2.
or 'phone: HOLborn 1396

A

FOLLOW THE FORUM PROGRAMME!

LONDON'S FOREMOST REPORTORY CINEMA

FORUM

Presents

SEASON OF GREAT RUSSIAN FILMS

Including

BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN

OCTOBER

(Ten Days that Shook the World)

THE GHOST THAT NEVER RETURNS

Programmes sent free on receipt of name and address

VILLIERS STREET, CHARING CROSS, LONDON, W.C.2

TEMPLE BAR 3931

FOR INFORMATION ON FILMS THAT MATTER

Write for

KINO NEWS

free from

KINO FILMS (1935) LTD.
84, GRAYS INN ROAD,
LONDON, W.C.1.
HOLBORN 1760.

ARTISTS PHOTOGRAPHERS
ARCHITECTS OPERATIVES
DESIGNERS ACTORS
DECORATORS SCULPTORS
WRITERS

CHELSEA STUDIO CLUB

183b KING'S ROAD
S.W.3

Apply to Secretary for particulars

film art

An independent quarterly devoted to the serious film

Editors:

Irene Nicholson **John C. Moore**

Assistant Editor:

Robert Fairthorne

VOL. 3 No. 7

CONTENTS

		Page
Editorial		7
Answers to a Questionnaire	*by* MAN RAY	9
Abstract Film	*by* S. JOHN WOODS	11
Ars Gratia Artis!	*by* JOHN C. MOORE	16
Library of Film Classics	*by* LEONARD HACKER	21
Toward the Newsreel of the Future (A Symposium)	*by* ANDREW BUCHANAN JOHN C. MOORE and IRENE NICHOLSON	22
Decline of the Soviet Cinema	*by* DR. WERNER BRANDES	27
A Spanish Director	*by* HAROLD LOWENSTEIN	28
The Cartoon and its Musical Score	*by* BERNARD HUTH	31
Escape (A Scenario)	*by* ROBERT FAIRTHORNE	33
Review Section		35
Friesennot (Werner Kortwich)		35
The Great Consoler (Lev Kuleshov)		36
La Kermesse Heroique (Jacques Feyder)		37
Crime and Punishment (Chenal)		38
L'Atalante (Jean Vigo)		38
Film Index		39
Book Reviews		40
Correspondence, Comment, Film Societies, etc.		42

Correspondents:

International: MARIE SETON
France: BRYAN MONTAGU, NANCY CUNARD.
Germany: DR. WERNER BRANDES.
U.S.A.: KIRK BOND, LEWIS JACOBS, LEONARD HACKER, HERMAN G. WEINBERG.

Foreign Agents:

France: *Au Pont de l'Europe,* 17 Rue Vignon, Paris VIIIe.
U.S.A. *Gotham Book Mart,* 51 West 47th Street, New York.
Australia: *McGills,* 183/5 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.
India: *Row & Co.,* Parel Tram Junction, Bombay.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLISHING OFFICES:
5 Joubert Studios, Jubilee Place, London, S.W.3.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
4s. 4d. per annum, postage free. Single copies 1s. 1d. postage free.
For Advertisements apply to the Advertising Manager.
OBTAINABLE FROM ALL BOOKSHOPS OR DIRECT FROM THE PUBLISHING OFFICES.

Copyright film art,

FOLLOW THE FORUM PROGRAMME!

LONDON'S FOREMOST REPORTORY CINEMA

FORUM

Presents

SEASON OF GREAT RUSSIAN FILMS

Including

BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN

OCTOBER
(Ten Days that Shook the World)

THE GHOST THAT NEVER RETURNS

Programmes sent free on receipt of name and address

VILLIERS STREET, CHARING CROSS, LONDON, W.C.2
TEMPLE BAR 3931

FOR INFORMATION ON FILMS THAT MATTER

Write for

KINO NEWS

free from

KINO FILMS (1935) LTD.
84, GRAYS INN ROAD,
LONDON, W.C.1.
HOLBORN 1760.

ARTISTS PHOTOGRAPHERS
ARCHITECTS OPERATIVES
DESIGNERS ACTORS
DECORATORS SCULPTORS
WRITERS

CHELSEA STUDIO CLUB

183b KING'S ROAD
S.W.3

Apply to Secretary for particulars